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The Times Literary Supplement

FRIDAY 4 JANUARY 1985 No 4,266 70p

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The Times Literary Supplement

January 4 1985
 Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC4M 4BX

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For brotherhood or for destructi

Leszek Kolakowski

DAVID MILLER

Anarchism
 216pp. Dent. £10.95 (paperback, £4.95).
 0460 100939

The first article I ever published, at the age of twenty, was, to my recollection, about Kropotkin's ethics. Being, needless to say, omniscient, like all adolescent Marxists - this last expression, on second thoughts, strikes me as pleonastic - I treated the patriarch of the anarchist movement with patronizing superiority as a naive well-wisher utterly ignorant of the realities of life. Having become in the meantime slightly less of an adolescent, I would now change my assessment to some extent, yet not entirely. Anarchism as a political programme is naive, but it is a kind of naivety of which perhaps we need a helping, at least in order to consider how we could have less, rather than more, of the state, even if we admit that it is impossible to get rid of it altogether. And, of course, the burden of the state (in democratic countries, let alone communist serfdom) is so much heavier today than it was before the First World War that a dose of anarchism would perhaps serve us well.

But how large a dose? We do not like the presence of a policeman when we drive too fast on a motorway, but we do not mind him being there when we walk on a street where being mugged is a possibility; we do not enjoy paying half of our income in taxes, but having free medical service and free schools does not rouse our indignation; we would prefer to travel all over the world without passports and visas but we are not enthusiastic about millions of foreigners freely settling in a country we happen to be denizens of. We resent the state and we want more and more of it, used as we have become to believing that the state's duty is to make us happy, wealthy, healthy, carefree, free of responsibilities and ultimately free of the state as well. Since the entire anarchist ideology is about the curse of the state, it is useful to think about its suggestions, however impracticable.

David Miller's *Anarchism* is a general exposition of anarchist doctrines in a thematic, rather than chronological, order. Though written in a lifeless, monotonous prose, it is a fair, reasonable and critical description of a phenomenon which is far from being buried, even if its influence has become more diffuse and less recognizable than it was some decades ago. The author relies almost entirely on the literature available in English (with the exception of two or three French books). He does not seem acquainted with important German studies on the subject or with any sources written in Russian or German, let alone in more exotic tongues, and some of the most interesting ideologists of anarchism (like Machajski and Sorel) are hardly mentioned. He is apparently not knowledgeable enough to produce a comprehensive survey; still, the reader gets a good amount of well-ordered information and, in a separate chapter, a concise and balanced critique.

The taxonomy of anarchism is notoriously doubtful. The division into anarcho-communists, anarcho-individualists, anarcho-cooperators, anarcho-syndicalists and anarcho-mystics (suggested, if I remember correctly, by Blücher) is not universally admitted. Miller devotes a chapter to what he calls philosophical anarchism (which includes William Godwin and Max Stirner) and then discusses anarcho-communist and anarcho-individualist doctrines. The latter's central tenet was the inalienability of persons and property, whereas the former's philosophy was one of human solidarity and friendship. The individualists, at least the most consistent of them, espoused the idea of an entirely free market and believed that all the social functions of the state could be safely left in the hands of voluntary associations and private enterprise - including the police, the courts, the care of the disabled, defence and the protection of the environment. If, as a result, some of these goods are not provided at all, this is still better than their being supplied by the state bureaucracy. How to achieve this ideal? Not by violence, but rather by building alternative institutions which could compete with the state and by boycotting the state, eg.

refusing to pay taxes. This version of anarchism comes close, of course, to the radical liberalism that would, if it succeeded, deprive the state of all prerogatives except for the police, defence and - possibly, though not necessarily - printing money (once the monopoly of issuing money is abolished, everybody can issue money of his own: I can print money, the only trouble being that nobody will take it while everybody will take, say, the assignments of Lloyd's Bank; thus the "real" money will be established by competition.)

Anarcho-communists, who include such great figures as Malatesta, Kropotkin and Reclus, attacked capitalism on lines very similar to Marx's but put more stress on the independent oppressive role of the state and advocated a communist economic régime without compulsion: all means of production would be taken over by workers' associations, the goods would be distributed according to needs (it is not clear who would define what people need), money and trade would be done away with. The presupposition of this programme is that this is what everyone really wants and so, once the state has been destroyed, everyone will cheerfully join the new order or orderlessness. Crime will disappear more or less instantly and natural human solidarity be restored.

As to the anarcho-syndicalist approach, it should not be identified with, although it overlaps, syndicalism proper. Proponents of the latter, in conformity with anarchist principles, refused to take part in party politics or in the parliamentary game and wanted to keep their class purity, admitting no intellectuals into their ranks; they considered worker unions as an embryo of the future society that would emerge from the ruin of capitalism as a result of the general strike. Anarcho-syndicalists tended to see unions as an instrument of their activity, rather than to identify themselves with them, and they did not think that this particular form of organization, adapted to the day-to-day struggle in a capitalist society, could be smoothly converted into the new society.

For most of its history the anarchist movement lived, not surprisingly, in never-ending squabbles with communism, especially with its Marxist variety. Proudhon predicted that state communism would inevitably reduce human beings to state property. Bakunin argued that any revolution which gave power to a workers' party was bound to transform the new political élite into a privileged caste of upstarts and re-create all kinds of oppression and domination. The Polish anarcho-cooperator Edward Abramowski reflected on a possible miracle which would establish a communist system in present society, with its existing moral habits and wants; this system would be an artificial social monster, based on rigid class division and using all oppressive measures to protect the ruling parvenus; the only real hope for an alternative society lies in long-term education, which will transform human minds, in particular by the expansion of the co-operative movement within the capitalist economy. Benjamin Tucker noticed that the only medicine for monopolies known to Marxism was to replace them by one big monopoly. All these strictures, and many others, were made in the nineteenth century, long before Marxism, somewhat trimmed but not fundamentally distorted, became the working ideology of a totalitarian state. Its despotic potential was discovered and analysed without waiting for the empirical confirmation which was to come in due time; this reminder grates somewhat on the ears of those who keep arguing that Sovietism is an accidental freak in the history of the doctrine, that it has nothing to do with the Marxian legacy and that it results from a momentary absent-mindedness of the Muses who chose an improper testing-ground for the great humanist idea.

But the Marxist's anti-anarchist arguments were not unreasonable. They pointed out the economic impossibility of anarchist dreams. "If totally autonomous associations take over the entire production process," the Marxist says, "they will by necessity reproduce all the laws of accumulation, all the inequalities, bankruptcies and crises characteristic of a purely liberal economy." The anarchist replies: "No, because there will be no money and no exchange." The Marxist: "How to do that? Proudhon's labour money? Without a market? This is childish nonsense, not an economy; ie,

no exchange can be based on the assumption that everybody will honestly report how much time he has spent on growing a pound of potatoes; as to average labour time, it cannot be calculated without a market." The anarchist: "We do not need exchange at all; everybody will produce whatever he can and give the surplus to the brothers who, with the same generosity, will give him their surplus. In other words, it will not be the barter economy of primitive tribes; there will be no barter and no economy, just fraternal help." The Marxist: "How do you imagine the modern economy, where the majority of people do not work at all in direct processing of material objects and where each factory depends on thousands of other factories scattered all over the world, working on those principles? Suppose God arranges the great anarchist revolution: There will still be Los Angeles and Tokyo, London and Mexico City and the expanding Sahara; what do you plan to do with it?" The anarchist: "Oh, we will somehow manage, all men will be brothers and they will easily solve small technical problems."

"And so," the Marxist replies, "what you want is to throw mankind back to the neolithic level?" The anarchist: "Not at all, modern technology is here to stay, only the false needs will be abolished and people will stop producing things which they do not really need." The Marxist: "How do you convince them that they should get rid of those artificial needs?" The anarchist: "Oh, this is very easy, the great revolution will make them aware of the truth and, besides, all men will be brothers. And do you, Marxists, not want to abolish the market and get rid of false needs, too?" The Marxist: "Oh yes, but our plan is scientific, very, very scientific even. We do not dream, like you, of going back to a medieval Swiss village. Everything will be planned, produced and distributed by the state and the state will decide which needs are genuine and which artificially imposed by the capitalist advertising system."

Anarchists, indeed, are strongest when they criticize Marxism as an infallible prescription for despotism. Marxists are strongest when they attack anarchism as a puerile utopia. Both are right, alas.

Both are right, but a big difference between the Marxist and the anarchist blueprint for universal hilarity is that the former is feasible and the latter is not. One cannot perhaps suppress the market entirely, it persists even in a concentration camp - which probably comes closest to what an ideal non-market economy would be in modern society. One can suppress it, however, to such an extent as to destroy all the sources of information which only the market can provide, to stifle the possibilities of innovation, to make the entire production system highly inefficient and to organize a police state which is the sole owner of all wealth, of people, of the information and communication instruments and of human souls as well. It is remarkable that all economic reforms in communist countries, to the extent that they yield any results at all, go invariably in the same direction towards a partial restoration of the market, that is of "capitalism". Meanwhile, in the countries with mixed economies, if something goes wrong in nationalized industries or services, it is caused, according to the standard Marxist explanation, by the fact that not everything is yet nationalized. If the education system is not satisfactory, this is because there are still private schools in existence; if the public health service does not work properly, this is because private medical practice is still permissible, etc. And so the only way to progress consists in forbidding people to engage in any socially useful activity unless they are ordered to do so by the state; the universal medicine for all social ills is more police, more bureaucracy, more control, more spies, more interdictions.

The anarchists abhor this solution, of course. Unfortunately, as Miller rightly points out in his book, they failed (apart from the Manchester School individualists) to offer any credible economic alternative to the two existing models - the market and so-called central planning (the latter being in fact less planning than an instrument whereby people are prevented from producing and satisfying their needs).

And Miller argues, again I think rightly, that the anarchist ideal of a society without the state, that is without law, might be conceivable

in small, self-sufficient communities (where personal freedom tends to be conspicuous by its absence and obedience to traditional norms prevails) but not in a fluid, open and large society which cannot live without a uniform legal system; there is no reason to expect that supposedly autonomous communities will spontaneously produce the same rules to deal with all cases of anti-social behaviour; meanwhile people can easily migrate from one community to another. Assuming, *per impossibile*, that an anarchist society is feasible, it would be most likely in a state of permanent war. This leads the author to the question "whether anarchism is not... a pre-industrial ideology".

One may add that a successful anarchist revolution is most unlikely for yet another reason. Its success depends on a highly improbable negative condition, namely that there be no organized force in the society trying to establish its power and taking profit from the absence of a central authority which might prevent it from doing so. The anarchists often argue that the Russian Revolution bore out their criticism of Marxist state socialism: an attempt to build a "new society" by compulsion must end in a police state. But the same case can be easily turned against the anarchist doctrine. The Bolsheviks did not "make" the Revolution, they only staged the October coup. The Revolution was a large popular movement of which the predominant ideology was nothing other than an anarchist utopia: Soviet power - not a communist state run by one minority party. The Bolsheviks succeeded in taming the anarchist-revolutionary process, by using it and imposing on it their own despotic form of government. The Revolution simply could not have won in its anarchist utopian form, or rather it could have won only if there had been no forces, like the Bolsheviks, aiming at a monopolistic power of their own. And there is no way that the anarchists in similar circumstances - when existing institutions have nearly crumbled and dissolved - can prevent other forces, striving after power, from emerging and eventually raping the defenceless society. It is the anarchists who should know that power has already been an enormously desired good in itself, apart from the other profit people gain from it, and there is never a shortage of movements and people ready to grab power whenever the institutional fabric of a society is collapsing. Therefore revolutionary anarchists can in practice do nothing but unintentionally support the totalitarian forces operating in democratic societies.

Some anarchists, to be sure, knew this and rejected the idea of revolution altogether. They advocated, rather, work by example, by building alternative communities within existing societies. Alas, all those attempts, with one exception, proved to be miserable failures. The only counter-example, however, is hardly ever discussed, to my knowledge, by the prophets of a "new alternative society", whether anarchists or Marxists (and Miller does not discuss it either). This single success story is that of the Israeli kibbutzim, which have been working already for three generations. They operate, no doubt, within the market economy and they have to adjust their production to its demands; and it is not certain how long they may survive. Nevertheless they provide the only example of voluntary, economically efficient associations organized on traditional socialist/anarchist principles. Marxists and communists of all persuasions intensely dislike this uniquely successful implementation of those traditional principles and for more than one reason. These associations are voluntary, rather than being imposed by the state and its police, like the Soviet kolkhozes, and thus their very existence is strikingly anti-Marxist. And they happen to be Jewish; an unpardonable vice, since a very large part of antisemitism has been absorbed under the label of anti-Zionism and, without causing indignation, by the advocates of Progress, the New Socialist Society and the Happiness of Mankind (I am not implying that all anti-Zionists are antisemites, of course, only that nearly all antisemites call themselves conveniently anti-Zionists; by assuming that the conquest of Israel by the PLO would make a day of heavenly joy for humanity and for Jews in particular, they assert their commitment to the cause of universal fraternity.)

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No matter how many varieties of the anarchist ideology can be counted, there are, among anarchists, two fundamentally different mentalities. There are, quite simply, men of love and men of hatred. The former dream of human brotherhood and want to work by example, however unsuccessfully; the latter dream of the destruction of the world they hate, for whatever psychological reasons. Men of love give anarchism a kind of justification in so far as the human race cannot survive without the idea of universal brotherhood, no matter how impracticable it might be; and their effort is not in vain. The same idea of brotherhood becomes pernicious and malignant if its adherents convince themselves that they have a technical prescription for implementing it, and this is what men of hatred among anarchists do. Not unlike Marxists, they promise us brotherhood by decree and they do not mind this splendid goal being achieved by totalitarian coercion. Destruction is the only thing they are capable of thinking about and they are not really much interested in what will come next; sometimes they even raise this lack of interest and their intellectual helplessness to the dignity of a superior wisdom ("one cannot predict the future forms of society, the point is to smash the existing one.") They share with most ideologically committed Marxists an anti-

technical prescription for implementing it, and this is what men of hatred among anarchists do. Not unlike Marxists, they promise us brotherhood by decree and they do not mind this splendid goal being achieved by totalitarian coercion. Destruction is the only thing they are capable of thinking about and they are not really much interested in what will come next; sometimes they even raise this lack of interest and their intellectual helplessness to the dignity of a superior wisdom ("one cannot predict the future forms of society, the point is to smash the existing one.") They share with most ideologically committed Marxists an anti-

historical mentality, not in the sense of being necessarily uninterested in history but in the sense of believing that at a certain date people can shed the burden of their past and start "true history" afresh, so that a truly new man, immune to the past, will emerge. (But what if he does not want to?)

Thus, men of love among anarchists have a good point in their favour; men of hatred have none.

Anarchism is not important nowadays in its pure ideological form. It survives rather in curious self-contradictory mixtures (and without its proper title) with Marxist ideology, in various leftist sects which, with the help of anarch-

ist phrases, attempt to remove the inescapable consequences of state socialism and promise us, in effect, a glorious world where everything will be ordered by the state and unrestricted freedom will flourish.

The historical merit of anarchism is its persistent stress on power as a separate source of oppression and its mistrust of state machinery. Anarchists are unable to offer us any stateless happiness but they put us on our guard. Their ideology may be, and probably is, pre-industrial, but there is nothing wrong with thinking not only of the miseries but of some of the lost virtues of pre-industrial life; after all, there are no net gains in Progress.

What comes naturally

Brian Johnson

FRITJOF CAPRA and CHARLENE SPRETNAK
Green Politics
238pp. Hutchinson. £10.95.
0091587700
JONATHAN PORRITT
Seeing Green: The politics of ecology explained
249pp. Blackwell. £15 (paperback, £3.95).
0631138927

Green Politics: The global promise is the first book to address the origins, position and course of the new ecological movement. The history of Green politics already spans almost two decades: the first Green party being the ill-fated Values Party of New Zealand. In Europe the Greening of Politics began in 1979 with direct elections to the European Parliament. Although none of the newly founded Green parties gained a single seat, the opportunity offered in the ten member states, with the exception of Britain, by proportional representation (and in the case of Germany the \$1.3 million in federal funds which came with 3.2 per cent of the vote) was the catalyst that precipitated simultaneous Green political action.

In Belgium, where the Flemish Agelev and Walloon Ecolo parties between them won 7 per cent of the vote in the Euro-election, the first solid step to participation in government came through coalition with Social Democrats in the municipal elections of Liège. But it is in Germany that *Die Grünen* have been most successful. So it is appropriate that two thirds of Fritjof Capra and Charlene Spretnak's book is devoted to a description and evaluation of the German Greens. A nurse, three engineers, several teachers, a veterinary surgeon, a journalist, a former general, a bookseller and a lawyer – the procession of twenty-eight people who on March 22, 1983, took their seats in the Bundestag as the first new party to be elected in over thirty years – demonstrated that the Greens drew support from a varied cross-section of Germany's professional classes. But organized labour, big capital and the owners of land were conspicuously absent and the German Greens clearly have little following yet among the recruiting grounds of left and right. Yet they have succeeded – to a degree which should embarrass the SDP-Liberal Alliance in this country – in clarifying a political position whose intellectual origins may be found among the early anarcho-syndicalists: Proudhon, Bakunin, Malatesta, Kropotkin.

The founding convention of the German Greens at Offenbach in October 1979 produced a lot of wrangling over left-right implications raised by reintroduction of radical propositions of ecology into everyday politics, but the movement's seventy-four-year-old "grandfather", August Haussleiter, managed to shape the chaos into the four tenets of the Green Party:

"I myself had been almost desperate with the situation because there were 3,000 people screaming their own positions in the convention hall. This person kept saying: 'Don't give up. Don't give up. They're letting you in.' Although agreement seemed impossible, I took a piece of paper and wrote four (in German) words: ecology, social responsibility, democracy, and non-violence. Then I read them together. (A leader of the conservatives) and Rastbach (a leader of the radical left) in the room where the decisions were said: 'Sign it'. We then went back into the convention hall and announced: 'We have a program'."

These main points have since been supplemented by others that have derived from them. Prominent among these are decentralization – the German Greens, like most others in Europe, reject both the rationale and the programme of the European Community as centralist, remote, pro-growth and pro-industrial – pacifism and feminism.

As ecological politics in Germany have steered a precarious course between left and right, their worst hesitations have been over industrial and employment questions. Also *Die Grünen*, despite their rejection of Marxist pressures and their insistence, in defence matters, on an even-handed approach between East and West, not to mention their claim to solidarity with the Third World's poor and above all their hostility to multinational enterprise, convey more than a hint of inclination towards the left. That, despite well-publicized internal dissensions, they have so far survived capture by the forces of left or right in their brief German and European political life, is a tribute to the wits and ingenuity of their leadership. But it equally reflects their determined application to contemporary politics and the need to move from quantitative expansion towards qualitative change in thinking and living.

In *Seeing Green – The politics of ecology explained* Jonathan Porritt offers a personal account of political growth, starting from the premise that humanity is in the process of destroying itself by ignoring and attacking the ecological infra-structure which sustains life on earth. Inevitably he covers much largely familiar ground. His case for a *démarche* in British political agendas is well made, yet his claim that his thinking diverges radically from the proposed ecological sensitivities of the Liberal-SDP Alliance does not seem strong. When compared to the platform of *Die Grünen*, a central weakness of the British Ecology Party, which Porritt leads, becomes clear. Unlike *Die Grünen*, which embraced the Peace Movement in German politics, the British Ecology Party has been inhibited from identification with a peace movement still dominated by CND, with its strong ties to the British left.

Perhaps not surprisingly, when one considers the powerful forces ranged against them, the Green parties of Europe draw their strength from a firm ideology and conviction politics. Yet the grouping of issues and attitudes which is the stuff of power-broking left, right and centre, confounds the Greens with some intellectually painful questions: Are they by logic pacifists? Is their view that a decentralized Europe protected by a Swiss-style (and of course, non-nuclear) citizens' militia could avoid rapid subversion or intimidation by nuclear-armed superpowers any different from traditional pacifist idealism?

Despite the many insights and restored humanities which inform Green politics, its central irony is that it seeks to integrate man with nature without recognizing his true nature. Man the predator, *homo rapens*, still sits naturally at the apex of the food chain. He remains where Rome left him, "Sole judge of Truth / In endless error hurled".

Wolf Meidl's *Western Europe and Japan: between the Superpowers* (181pp. Croom Helm £15.95; 0 7099 1722 8) is a thoughtful and original contribution to the debate over the security of Western Europe and Japan, arguing that these two spheres should retain their basic security relationship with the United States while seeking to make the Soviet Union a partner rather than a major power.

Trying not to provoke

Patrick Glynn

GWYN PRINS (Editor)
The Choice: Nuclear weapons versus security
251pp. Chatto and Windus/The Hogarth Press.
£12.95 (paperback, £6.95).
0 7011 2832 1

The most important question raised by the title of this book is also the one least clearly answered within – namely, what role will the Soviet Union play in the "choice" to which it refers? It seems obvious enough that any serious effort to reduce or eliminate nuclear weapons will require the close co-operation of the Russians. Yet the fact remains that even at the height of what could be termed the classical era of arms control, the West experienced the gravest difficulties in its attempt to draw the Soviet Union into a genuinely reciprocal disarmament process.

It is largely by ignoring or playing down this intractable dimension of the nuclear problem that activists can sometimes make the "choice" facing humanity seem suddenly easier than it might normally appear. It is also one reason why those in opposition can frame grander and simpler solutions to the nuclear dilemma than those in power, and why former officials are generally in a position to sound more sage and magnanimous on this topic than those who still have responsibility for the day-to-day conduct of the West's affairs.

The book's sixteen contributors include, along with a number of British and Canadian peace activists and academics, several former officials, all Americans. Among the latter are the national security adviser to President Kennedy, some retired generals and admirals, a well-known former US ambassador to Moscow, and a man who served with the US SALT 1 delegation. Most were active proponents of arms control while in office, and their statements here generally represent a continuation or expansion of the views they promoted while in government, rather than a sharp break with their previous positions or a "sea change", as Gwyn Prins, the editor of the volume, at one point seems to imply.

Yet what they share in these essays is a tendency to sidestep the critical question of how the Soviet role in the arms-control process could be made more productive. "The negotiations on nuclear arms reduction, as they existed before they stopped completely", complains Noel Gayler, a retired admiral and former commander of the US forces in the Pacific, "were mostly a continuation of the same tired old process. They were adversarial." This is true enough, but it begs the question of how an adversary is to be prevented from behaving adversarially.

In the memoirs of those who actually negotiated the major arms-control agreements of the 1970s, there appears to be remarkable unanimity on one point. It is summarized succinctly in an essay here by David Holloway – the only contributor to consider in detail the myriad problems posed by the attitudes of the Russians themselves: "Negotiating with the Soviet Union has always been an intensely frustrating experience."

It is probably a tacit reflection of this frustration that the remedies proposed in *The Choice* are overwhelmingly unilateral: as opposed to bilateral, in emphasis. McGeorge Bundy, for example, offers a new variant of the old theory of mutual deterrence, which he has renamed

"existential deterrence". The idea of minimal deterrence suggests that any nation which retains a certain minimum of nuclear weapons with which to strike back at an adversary's society can count itself immune from nuclear attack. Bundy extends this to the more ambitious, and more dubious, proposition that such a nation is also immune from nuclear blackmail, even by another nation with a vastly greater nuclear arsenal.

But the striking feature of Bundy's doctrine is its unilateral focus. "Existential deterrence" is recognizably the lineal descendant of "mutual assured destruction" – a posture which Bundy had a hand in shaping as national security adviser to President Kennedy. But what is absent from the new theory is the element of "mutuality". Once upon a time the United States was counselled to restrain its arming on the grounds that the Soviet Union would be brought to reciprocate. The same restraint is advised now; what is missing is any real promise or hope of Soviet reciprocation.

Yet the myth that salvation lies in the adoption by the West of a still less "provocative" posture towards the Soviet Union persists, and in fact it is taken to sometimes dangerous lengths by some of the lesser known, more radical contributors to this book. Robert Neild, former director of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, goes so far as to hint that a truly non-provocative strategy may require Nato to curtail its air forces and mechanized divisions – an interesting proposition, considering that, even by the most optimistic estimates, Nato's forces are already measurably weaker than those of the Warsaw Pact. In a similar vein, Malcolm Chalmers, another advocate of a "non-provocative" defence, cites important new work on conventional deterrence by John J. Mearsheimer and William W. Kaufmann, to support his proposal for a "no first use" nuclear posture by Nato. But significantly, while Mearsheimer and Kaufmann separately show that Nato's conventional deterrent is substantially stronger than many had believed, neither analyst is a clear advocate of "no first use". Kaufmann withholds judgment on the question, while Mearsheimer is quite insistent that tactical nuclear weapons remain essential to Nato's deterrent – chiefly because, by forcing the Warsaw Pact to prepare for both nuclear and conventional war, they make it extremely difficult for the Pact to plan confidently for either.

What the proposals here for fresh concessions on the part of the West have in common is a reluctance to accept the fact that whether the Russians choose to come around on the issue is not entirely in our control. This admittedly provides much cause for frustration, though hardly reason for despair. As Mearsheimer's work in particular shows, given a modest willingness to upgrade and modernize its defences, the Western alliance has it well within its power to deter war indefinitely, even if we do not have the ability, acting alone, to banish the nuclear menace from the face of the earth.

The point is that the choice we face has never been that between "nuclear weapons" and "security". Nuclear weapons remain essential to our security. This is not altogether comforting, but whatever risks our present situation may entail, they are nothing beside the dangers which will multiply if the West, following the fallacious logic offered by some of those here, inclines toward unilateral disarmament as its answer to the nuclear problem.

Meetings with leaders

Gordon K. Lewis

GRAHAM GREENE
Getting to Know the General: The story of an involvement
224pp. Bodley Head. £8.95.
0370 30808 5
CARLOS FRANQUI
Family Portrait with Fidel
262pp. Cape. £12.95 (paperback, £5.95).
0224 02268 7

All revolutions produce their memorialist literature, written variously by the victorious chieftains, the lost leaders, the disillusioned disciples, and the outside protagonists and critics. The modern revolutions of the Caribbean and Central American region have added their own quota to what is a rich literature. In recent years we have had Che Guevara's diaries, Omar Cabeza on the experiences of an anti-Somoza guerrilla fighter, Ernesto Cardenal's affectionate portrait of his friend Fidel Castro, and the brief accounts of survivors of the betrayed Grenada Revolution. They are valuable because, composed by insiders, they put into proper perspective the books of radical-chic American and European outsiders who are often tempted to build up romantic myths about the Third World. More than that, they tell us much about the trauma of New World peoples in their continuing struggle against colonialism and imperialism.

These two books add to this literature. Graham Greene's memoir of his friendship with the Panamanian strong man Omar Torrijos is, in one way, a continuation of Greene's lifelong interest in things Spanish, going back, as he has related in his autobiographical *A Sort of Life*, to an early reading of Carlyle's book on the figure of John Sterling and Carlist struggles in Victorian London. The friendship started with a mysterious invitation to visit Panama in 1976, for neither man knew each other before. It blossomed into a deep and warm mutual attachment. The portrait that emerges of Torrijos is fascinating. Himself of peasant stock, he holds court with his village constituents in an atmosphere of real, not forced equality, sharing with them a coarse peasant humour and listening to their complaints; he instinctively dislikes intellectuals, politicians, and the big-city types; he enjoys women as only Latins perhaps can. But he is *no macho*, which is why, Greene observes, "I came to love him so much."

He is loyal to his friends, and insists that Greene visits them – Castro in Havana, Ortega in Nicaragua, Prime Minister George Price in Belize, who Greene discovers to be a Catholic in religion and a socialist in politics, with a sense of uneasy humility about his own power, almost like Torrijos himself. Torrijos, of course, is a *caudillo*, for he has come into power through the conventional route of a *coup d'état* launched from the army camps. But he is no typical *caudillo*, for there is nothing corruptive about him. He wants to rid his country of the old rule of the privileged oligarchy but he intends to do it, if possible, by constitutional methods; indeed, as Greene notices, there is about him an awareness of impending death which, added to his shyness, sentimentality and social *gaucherie*, makes it impossible for him to think in terms of a dictatorial life-presidency over his nation.

Torrijos's real tragedy, perhaps, was that he was a soldier without a war, for his one dream was to undertake a popular rebellion, in the manner of Castro in the Sierra Maestra, against the hated Yanqui invaders. Instead, he was obliged to settle for the diplomatic concession of the 1979 Panama Canal Zone treaties. Yet even there he left his mark; and few pages in this book are more enchanting than the hilarious account of the ceremonial signing of the treaties in the Hall of the Organisation of American States in Washington where the General, triumphantly, had the last laugh.

In this curious friendship there was, clearly enough, a meeting of both heart and mind. Across the barrier of language Greene and Torrijos shared much with each other. Both were interested – from quite different cultural backgrounds – in people rather than in theories or in institutions. Greene responded to the fact that Torrijos, as he puts it, had an exaggerated respect for the "instinct for human character" which is perhaps inherent in all "imaginative

writer. He also liked the General's disdain for ideological labelling, for Torrijos was essentially a populist – a patriot and idealist with no formal ideology, except a general preference for Left over Right, and a scorn for bureaucrats, which has also been Greene's trademark throughout his years of writing on the Third World. The General was more at home in the teeming slums of Panama City than in the presidential palace. His close encounters with the people, Greene remarks, were nearer to the democracy of the Athenian *agora* than to the democracy of the House of Commons, and not for that reason to be despised.

Nothing better illustrates this temper of the book than Greene's other friendship, with Chuchú, the General's aide, confidant, and security man, half-Mayan, half-Creole, utterly devoted to his chief, peasant to the core, mixing his hard drinking and direct, simple pleasure in women with a fondness for European poetry and defiant revolutionary songs. In



One of W. Eugene Smith's photographs "From the Halil series, 1938-39", reproduced from *The Archive, Number 20*, which also contains an essay by William S. Johnson, "W. Eugene Smith: Middle Years. It is the companion volume to issue number 12 (1980), which was devoted to Smith's early works from 1939 to 1951. The Archive is available from the Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, 843 E University Blvd, Tucson, Arizona 85719.

both Torrijos and Chuchú, indeed, Greene notes the combination, typically Latin American, of a strong tone of romanticism and a streak of popular cynical wisdom. So, Greene leaves the political theory of their struggle to others; one must go to a book like William Jordan's *Panama Odyssey* (Texas University Press, 1984) for the background to the struggle over the Canal treaties.

For Greene himself is a populist – as well as a novelist, raconteur and *aficionado* of human eccentricity – sceptical of labels; even his Catholicism has never been completely orthodox. He knows the simple psychological truth that, as Cardinal Newman put it, "many a man will live and die upon a dogma, no man will be a martyr for a conclusion". The figures of Torrijos and Chuchú, as Greene shows them, testify to that truth. He can fall in love with a strange, tropical society without becoming starry-eyed about it. He is not the academic tourist nor is he the sardonic cynic. He is, in sum, and quite differently, the born *voyageur*. One is reminded of the remark of one Victorian traveller in the West Indies on another, Froude's comment on Trollope that "there goes old Trollope banging around the world". One hopes that, in spite of his age, Greene will continue banging around the world.

Carlos Franqui's book, quite differently, relates not the growth of a new friendship but the decline of an old one. One-time member of the Cuban Communist Party, early associate of Fidel Castro, and editor of the vanguard newspaper *Revolución*, the author describes his sad and drawn-out break with the Cuban revolution and its *líder máximo*, which was based on his dislike of the adoption of a Communist ideology and a state structure modelled after the Soviet one-party system. Franqui believes that Castro's thirst for total power, which he claims to have noticed from the very beginning, turned the revolution into a vehicle for

the personality cult, thus betraying its early liberal promise. This, of course, is, for all students of the Cuban Revolution, the heart of the matter, the main charge of an already vast critical literature. Anyone who has visited Havana with his critical faculties intact will know that there is much truth in the charge. An over-centralized state bureaucracy has led to serious economic mismanagement; a general spirit of doctrinal orthodoxy makes for a dull and pedantic press; art and culture are controlled by the new state commissars; there are no free and independent institutions in any real sense, whether it is the mass media, the trade unions, or the churches; and thought and opinion, for the ordinary Cuban citizens, are controlled by the ubiquitous Committees for the Defence of the Revolution. Franqui makes much of all this, enlivened by the personal account of an insider. He is especially outraged by the official repression of the rich Cuban Afro-American subculture, by a Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy that denies that race and colour have any meaning within the framework of economic determinism. He himself finally became a victim; he gives a searing account of his final bitter encounter with his party enemies in the splendid Palace of the Revolution.

Yet none of this justifies a total indictment of the revolutionary achievement. Franqui omits too much. He lacks historical perspective, for in lamenting the anti-democratic character of the revolution he neglects to note that democracy, in the conventional Anglo-American sense, has never really existed in Cuba in either the colonial or the republican period, so that the proper comparison to make is not only between the present reality and an abstract democracy located in the mind but between the new Cuba and the old Cuba of the Batista régimes. It underestimates the weight of a continuing context of international hostility, for nothing is more guaranteed to place a strain on domestic liberties than the presence of a powerful enemy on the doorstep. And in the final analysis the reader is tempted to ask two quite simple questions: first, if the revolution so early on became the Red Terror that Franqui describes, why did he himself continue to service it for so many years? And, second, if Castro's megalomania converted him into the Stalinist monster that Franqui claims he became then why was Franqui finally permitted to go into voluntary exile unharmed? It is difficult not to feel that the case is melodramatically overstated.

The family portrait of Castro that emerges is, then, a seriously flawed one. He is chastised for becoming so dominant, almost as if the legend of the great hero-liberator, ever since Bolívar, has not been deeply rooted in the Latin American political mind. He is taken to task for his interminable flamboyant oratory, almost as if the art of oratory has not been throughout an integral element of the Cuban political culture. His humanitarian conduct of the Sierra campaign is praised on one page, but dismissed on the next as simply a tactic for winning the war. Franqui complains that Castro uses only vague, imprecise expressions in

conversation and treats people as objects. He seems not to realize that every head of state, in whatever system, must surround himself with some such sort of psychological defence-mechanism as a myriad of persons and interests lobby him for favourable decisions; the second Roosevelt honed it to a fine art in the American presidency. Castro is dismissed as a cultural philistine, with no interest in the arts, yet an appendix of letters from prison reveals him reading, among others, Thackeray, Turgenev, and Jorge Amado. Castro is shown as a one-dimensional figure: there is here little of the complex *persona* of Lee Lockwood's *Castro's Cuba, Cuba's Fidel*.

What the Cuban Revolution badly needs is the sort of critical analysis that scholars like E. H. Carr and Sir John Maynard provided on Soviet Russia. It is probably unfair to expect that from a professional journalist like Franqui: his book, in fact, reads like a newspaper, being divided into some sixty-five very brief chapters, each with a snazzy title and vying for the lead story on page one. There is too much anecdote, too little analysis, except perhaps when the author expands on the theme of the evil dominion of plantation sugar in Cuban socio-economic history. The main indictment against Castro is that he has strengthened the cult of personality. It thus overlooks the fact that, just as earlier in Mexico, the revolution has become elaborately institutionalized, so that Castro is hardly Stalin – which explains the current debate among American Cubanologists on "the limits of charisma". Ironically enough, Franqui himself seems to suffer from the same cult, for the book is replete with accounts of his meetings with the great and famous on the international revolutionary circuit, from Mikoyan and Khrushchev to Ben Bella and Jean-Paul Sartre. He is the inveterate name-dropper, which in any revolutionary lexicon would be termed a bourgeois disease. The contrast with Greene, who subordinates his own personality when talking with others and yet retains his intellectual integrity, is painfully apparent. Greene listens; Franqui lectures.

Both books, perhaps, have one thing in common. Franqui wants a democratic socialist régime, without statism. He almost seems to believe, against all the historical evidence, that the state under certain circumstances really will wither away. Greene sympathizes with Torrijos's dream of a social democratic Central America which would be no menace to the United States, but completely independent. Yet no one who knows the general condition of Middle America can allow himself much optimism in this matter. All of its societies, in varying degree, are plagued by social fragility, political instability, militarism, intractable ethnic and racial rivalries, grotesque class inequalities, persistent poverty, and a continuing structural economic dependency. Some five hundred years after the Discovery those domestic ills are still savagely compounded by the imported struggles of the extra-territorial superpowers; indeed, in 1992 who will celebrate what? It is not a theory that they confront, it is a condition.

John Donne Journal

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Dept. English, Box 8105, Raleigh, NC 27695.

Integrating the interior

Andrew Hurrell

JONATHAN KANDELL
Passage through El Dorado: Travelling the
world's last great wilderness
 303pp. Allison and Busby. £12.50.
 085031 6014

The Amazon and the interior of Latin America are undergoing a sustained assault that has gained momentum over the past ten years and now appears irreversible. The *conquistadores*, the Jesuits and the rubber barons all sought to penetrate and exploit this vast wilderness yet their impact on the region was both marginal and transitory. The present process of Amazonian development is far more dramatic and its

Such a passage is vintage Newby – a vintage with which *On the Shores of the Mediterranean* may make you intermittently merry, but not richly drunk.

"Native costumes Port des Français"; 1786, by Gaspard Duché de Vancy, reproduced from Early Maritime Artists of the Pacific Coast 1741-1841 by John Frazier (240pp, with 16 colour and 166 black-and-white illustrations. Seattle: University of Washington Press. \$40. 0295 96128 7).

Tony Lambert

ish-style cafés were built to blare out the locally execrated but supposedly *típico* Flamenco music on to a sea-front which was now a promenade. The young fishermen who at first followed Northern European women through the streets out of a sense of courtesy, finding them on the whole rather plain, learnt to adopt a more predatory approach.

This book testifies to Lewis's continuing concern with cultures under threat of extinction, which has contributed, most notably, to worldwide awareness of the plight of the Amazonian Indians. The tone is not merely elegiac; with a novelist's eye for a rounded story as well as an anthropologist's nosiness, Lewis disinters memorable lives and presents a rich array of brave, comic, idiosyncratic and above all dignified characters. Particularly endearing is the Quixotic village priest, who accepts with good-natured resignation his ambiguous role in a community where fishermen touch their testicles and spit into the wind to avert bad luck at the sight of him. His consolation is to sneak off whenever possible to forage among the Roman remains of Ampurdan; Another character who ends by commanding respect as well as affection is the impoverished landowner, Don Alberto, whose important feudalism and vain efforts to revive half-spurious folklore are born of a real respect for the village people which contrasts with the demonic vandalism of the black-market king.

The only mystery to remain unresolved in that of Lewis himself. Why was he so anxious to be accepted into this noble but alien and politically community? How fully accepted was he? How did he learn to communicate with such apparent ease and speed in what must have been a very local form of Catalan? (How can he recall incidents and conversations of nearly forty years ago in such wealth of detail?) Did he spend his whole time writing in a notebook? In short, how much imaginative license is there in this poetic book? It is perfectly credible that fishermen should have recounted the happenings of their days at sea in improvised verse, and the examples given here are very beautiful. But why in Castilian?

Newby is preferable in his more impish o-

Roland Littlewood

Social theorists, like other writers, have often used human morphology and physiology as a source of metaphors for society. Thus the brain stands for central government, the muscles for the labour force, the control of blood pressure for social homeostasis. We even find "acephalous" societies. Disease becomes a metaphor for undesirable social change and the body politic is susceptible to plagues and cancers.

In spite of the appeal and importance of its theme, Turner's book is unnecessarily discursive and repetitious. His primary reference point is Foucault's "anatomo-politics" and the idea that although the body is a physical given, it is still socially constructed. Medical science provides the crucial link between social regulation through institutions (schools, asylums, prisons) and professional control over the individual body (psychiatrists, dietitians). The dietary management, Turner's central concern, has passed from being a theological prescription, through medical moralism, to its present narcissistic cultivation of the "efficient body. Control of sexuality entails control of the body and the New Puritanism goes with concern for "body consciousness", jogging and a renascent athleticism.

Turner develops his argument for Foucault but criticizes him for his ahistorical approach and consequent pessimism. Foucault does not allow for anything outside the prevailing discourse which determines it or can serve as a starting-point for rebellion against it. Turner corrects this, with Marx's view of dependent natural reality, which although "pushed back" by cultural appropriation, constitutes an "uncontrolled" domain. He suggests that resistance to a dominant discourse can come from both conscious human agency and from this residual natural reality. Thus the "inevitable" association of pleasure with production provides one such centre of resistance (a rather optimistic assertion in view

Turner's resistances to the social structuring of experience have an optimistic, voluntarist feel, rather at odds with his thoroughgoing Foucauldian perspective; they appear at the end as psychological *dei ex machina*, a return of a "natural" reality which retains an elusive power to delimitate us. A purely functionalist view of the woman's illness with which he is concerned can, however, offer a theory of change. Anorexia nervosa, hysteria, overdoses, agoraphobia, shoplifting, baby snatching and even mild depression bear a close resemblance to conditions described in developing countries and glossed by psychiatrists as "culture-bound syndromes" and "possession states".

These are discrete patterns of behaviour specific to a particular society, which articulate a personal predicament and public concerns in usually opposition between age groups or sexes. They have a shared meaning as dramatized representations in an individual whose personal situation demonstrates such an opposition, but they also have a personal, expressive meaning for the individual and are instrumental in adjusting personal relationships in situations of deprivation or frustration. The individual is not held responsible for the behaviour, which is usually ascribed to possession, and this "mystical pressure" (

Philip Thody

It is sad to think that the beauty in the eye of the beholder fades almost as quickly as the beautiful physique to which time is already indifferent. In 2014, the photographs of Catherine Deneuve and Meryl Streep will look as comically unattractive to our grandchildren as those of Mae West and even of Jane Russell can do to us today.

as early as the eighteenth century explained why: too much water makes you sterile, so the removal of your natural body-smells considerably reduces your sexual charms. The contrast at Versailles between the vast quantities of water in the decorative fountains and the expense of only one *cabinet de toilette* (as opposed to 274 *chaises percées*) is another indication of how the vision which we have of ourselves and of our impact on others has far more influence on our behaviour than the limits or potentialities of our technology; and Perrot argues in this conclusion that our now almost-total mastery of nature has brought us no closer to a satisfactory relationship to other people. It is perhaps not so much the beautiful, bejewelled and well-organised

Such reactions employ dominant social institutions to personal advantage. They represent what Victor Turner has called "the power of the weak". In Western societies, as Turner notes, medicine has replaced religion as the guardian of morality and the notion of "disease" both exculpates the individual act and ties it to unquestionable, shared assumptions about individual identity and attribution. Anorexia nervosa is more complex than reactions such as shoplifting, partly because after time, dieting and weight loss bring into play certain hormonal changes which are difficult to reverse. The reaction itself is ambiguous in the while it represents an excessive female conformity to an ideal held by men, it also marks rejection of adult female sexuality by making pregnancy impossible and an extreme affirmation of control (with which men tend not to credit women).

Whatever the resistance to medical patriarchy which syndromes such as anorexia nervosa demonstrate, how functional and instrumental is it at the present? While shoplifting and agoraphobia seem relatively harmless, anorexia frequently ends in death. It may be that the reaction recognized as anorexia is only the medically perceived extreme of a constant dialogue between men and women on the matter of the latter's physical appearance; at any of time four-fifths of adolescent girls consider themselves to be "on a diet."

bodies, our conveniently cut clothes and washed hair, we are still terrified of revealing our feelings. All we have done, in his view, is replace the ostentatious artificiality of earlier periods by a set of inner constraints which prevent us from allowing people to see us as really are.

We consequently spend just as much time on our ancestors did in trying to alter our appearances, and in this respect the title of Perrot's book is exceptionally well chosen. We do work hard on how we look, and the semiology of everyday life, of which Perrot is so acute an observer, is essentially the study of the very strenuous and often painful efforts which human beings make to bring their outward appearance into line with their ideal or vision of themselves. These efforts do not, of course, enable us to achieve the Rousseauesque ambition of "being natural" which has since the second half of the eighteenth century been so important a part of the European tradition. Because we persistently confuse the natural with being attractive, we immediately find fault with the bodies that nature has given us. We consequently proceed to work upon our bodies in order to bring them up to the desired standard.

Patrick Maurières agrees with Perrot in seeing what he calls "les grandes hyperboles de l'impression" as dangerous to our emotional health, and follows Barthes in content as in style, recommending the conscious and stylized acceptance of artifice – the quality which characterizes "le mondain" – as the only way which human beings can make sense of their situation. He quotes some sensible advice from Castiglione to the effect that the best for self-knowledge is an acute awareness of one's limitations, and that one should not try to imitate, and human beings have never been short of examples to follow. Maurières contrasts on the ones which have been more recently fashionable in Paris, revealing as they do that the bright young things on both right and left bank are going through a phase imitating what they think of as the most up-to-date aspects of Anglo-American culture. He leads him, since he also seems to know how to intersperse references to *Panama*, *Tauapeite*, *le chiasme* and *Hypostase* with mention of such familiar entities as "l'érotisme cheap" and "la publicness anglaise" – this is all very instructive. So, too, are his references to Sugarhill's gang and the world of punk, *le rap*, *le rushed potatoes* and *le m* through the imminent demise of some of our entities. It's a prospect one can bear equanimity.

Michael Ignatieff

This is one of those books whose quiet authority draws a reader into a mood of meditative attention. At first sight, it is liable to be dismissed as a notebook which ought to have been left to mature into an essay. Readers already suspicious of the Berger persona may even see in its fragmentary form a guru's pretension. Yet this is actually among the most finished of Berger's works because it is the most serene, the one least troubled by the impulse to instruct or convert.

All of Berger's work has tried to break away from the enclosure of accepted forms. In this work, the path-breaking is in the presentation of the metaphysical. Professional metaphysicians will undoubtedly believe that they have nothing to learn from reflections on timelessness and death interspersed with passages on tree-felling in Savoie, the play of white kittens against a white wall, or the golden light of the setting sun on an illad. Yet there is a radical metaphysical tradition, within which are counted Thoreau, Kierkegaard and Montaigne, who have treated the philosophy of life and death as a challenge to the limits of form and whose deepest thought is a fragmentary reflection on the humblest features of a day: chopping wood, the ache of a kidney stone, loneliness at night. This tradition has become the most imaginative substitute for theology in secular culture. In deriving the general from the particular, the deepest thought from the humblest example, it has followed William Carlos Williams's maxim: "no ideas but in things". This is the tradition in which *And Faces* properly belongs.

Two themes run through the book, holding the fragments together. The first is an ideal of love as the only form of home—of belonging—which a transient, migratory modern world allows. This theme emerges particularly in Berger's evocations of the paintings of Rembrandt, Van Gogh and Caravaggio. For Rembrandt and Caravaggio is not only the painter of Livorno underworld, but also of the longing for the body for the one shelter from the cruelty of the world which poverty and oppression allow "to sleep together. Here. Now."

The other sustaining thread is the theme of the imperialism of Western time which measures the time of the tortoise and the time of the hare as if they were the same and organizes a race to discover which will cross the finish line first. Modern culture, Berger says in *On Swiftness*, seems to have bartered away the idea of History and Progress the conception of the timeless and the eternal. Time was always understood as a turning wheel; but was always seen to be turning on a timeless ground. In the loss of that eternal ground from our imaginations, the wheel of Time has become the wheel of Death, triumphant over human striving in time.

Time and Death are grand and risky themes and just occasionally Berger's prose seems over-reach the thought and tumble into emptily grandiose, as when he writes:

When a great singer sings, the skin of space and go taut, the voices of the newborn fill the world; there is no corner left of silence or of innocence. The gown of life is turned inside out, the singer becomes earth and sky, time past and time to come are singers, one of the sons of a single life.

For the most part, the lyricism of his prose is disciplined by simple and austere thoughts that ends with the unforgettable image of a charnel house of the future where his bones will be pell-mell among the bones of other human beings, metacarpal against breast-bone, a hundred bones of his feet scattered like grass among the hundred bones of his below, both united and reconciled to their common fate as mere phosphate of calcium. It is astonishing and unfamiliar image of a person beyond the grave, an image of death which has the power to reconcile us to the humble firmness and love of life.

Miss Slyboots in Mayfair

Pat Rogers

FANNY BURNEY
Journals and Letters
 Volume XI, Mayfair 1818-1824
 Volume XII, Mayfair 1825-1840
 Edited by Joyce Hemlow with Althea Douglas
 and Patricia Hawkins
 1102pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £85 the set.
 0198125631

These volumes cover the last twenty-two years of Fanny Burney's life (she was now entitled to be styled "Comtesse", but chose to be known still as Madame d'Arbury). Her husband the general had died in Bath in 1818, whereupon she moved to London. Until her own death in 1840 she occupied a number of houses in Mayfair, and seldom travelled far. The correspondence of these years is black-edged, with a black seal, for it was the fate of an ageing lady to exist in almost perpetual mourning. There was, too, a Mayfair diary, 600 pages in type-script, but this has had to be excluded from the present edition, as too sporadic and casual. Some 350 letters are printed from the period, bringing the overall tally to 1,500 since this series took up Fanny's career on her retirement from court in 1791.

The main concern, as always, is the Burney dynasty, which by now includes Barretts, Paynes, Philippses, Rapers and others and centrally the one remaining d'Arbury. Fanny's drifting son Alexander, now well into his twenties but unable to settle. The attempts of his mother to turn him into a proper Burney – sober, industrious, single-minded and upwardly mobile – furnish the drama of these years. In 1824 Alexander became perpetual curate of the new Camden Chapel, serving a growing urban parish from its base in a Greek revival edifice. His mind was generally on other things, whether his versified Psalm translations, his literary friends in Brighton among the Horace Smith set, or his characteristically unproductive gallantries. His parishioners grew more and more impatient with his absences, and were glad to get rid of him finally in 1836. D'Arbury, now over forty, managed to obtain the ministry of Ely Chapel, Holborn, but he died within weeks of taking up his post.

What exactly was wrong with Alexander? His mother has a variety of semi-indulgent and question-begging terms of endearment for him: "my Nondescript", or simply "N.D.", or "Young Heedless", and the like. What she felt about him can be reconstructed from the index entries, a thesaurus of anti-Burneyism: "absence of mind, indifference, apathy, lethargy, inertia, negligence, nonchalance, imprudence, fecklessness (with respect to his own advantage), procrastination . . ." It is an attractive list in its way, and when Alexander leaves his friends Charles Babbage and the younger Herschel to survey the Alps "with their instruments of unheeded exactness", preferring, himself, to sit around Chamonix plotting a "Dithyrambe écrit au pied du Mont Blanc", he seems a hero ahead of his time. Fanny is determined to see him shine as a dancer ("Nymphs, have at ye all!") and worries about his thinness – worms are diagnosed at one point, but the state continues. His absences become more mysterious and incalculable; could he be a secret drinker, or a closet homosexual, or a drug addict? Probably something much simpler: he had, as Fanny noted, a "fatal fondness of Ruminant", and his difficulty in making the world's deadlines was cruelly conspicuous in such a family.

It will not do to blame his mother. She had tried, perhaps too hard, not to be unduly possessive: "My struggles are almost all directed not to curb the juvenile propensities, so natural, & so desirable, of my young companion, & to bear with his flights and eccentricities." She covers up for him when the Bishop demands retires and Alex is vacationing, or something in Paris. She writes occasional letters of admiration, spiky little paragraphs of pained rebuke, but this only after enduring a good deal from her maddening son. When he died he was finally contemplating marriage, at a time when the extended family had moved on a couple of generations. Fanny's great-niece Julia, the granddaughter of a younger sister, was on the point of starting a family, and indeed lost her husband in the same week that

Fanny died. Alex just could not keep up the Burney pace.

Meanwhile the family had lost its original props. The patriarch Dr Burney had died in 1814; selfish, innocent Charles junior, the classical scholar, had followed in 1817. Now in succession Fanny lost the remainder of her brothers and sisters, beginning with James, who had attained a Gilbertian rank of Admiral of the Yellow in recognition of his compilations of voyages, without having been to sea for donkey's years. Later she lost her eldest sister Esther, and then (after Alex's death) her close confidante Charlotte. Punctuating these events were the deaths of in-laws, nephews and nieces, great-nephews and great-nieces. A desperate fear underlying every page is that of the tubercle bacillus, which inspires the kind of terror reserved in other ages for its cousin the spirochete. Daily living arrangements are conditioned by this dread, and the itineraries are planned not for scenic purposes but to combat the threat – thus visits by members of the family to Minehead or to Cuckfield, to Spa, Lucca or Nice. Usually it is all unavailing.

Fanny herself went on indomitably, perpetuating her sense of the family in the *Memoirs* of her father which eventually appeared in 1832, and acting as archivist for the growing hoard of Burney papers which have sustained this notable edition since 1972. The *Memoirs* were criticized on flimsy grounds by Croker when they first appeared, whilst more recently Miriam Benkovitz has argued that they misrepresent Dr Burney's character, alternating as they do a biography of the musician with "a discursive autobiography of Mme d'Arbury". But one can understand Fanny's profound need to preserve the simulacrum of unity and dignity in the household. All the while skeletons were rattling in every cupboard, from St Martin's Street to County Louth. The whole Burney edifice was remarkably fragile, and it took a lot of doctoring of the annals to keep the house standing. It has been the achievement of Joyce Hemlow, in *The History of Fanny Burney* (1958) and with her collaborators in the twelve volumes of the papers, to reveal this situation.

To begin with, Dr Burney himself was entirely a self-made man: the youngest of twenty children sired by an irresolute stage performer, James MacBurney, who dropped the "Mac" as part of an unsuccessful bid for gentility. Charles's father and half-brother appeared in Smithfield drolls at the London fairs. As the editor remarks, "The versatile and talented Burneys were dancers, singers, actors, musicians, novelists, and journalists, that is to say, entertainers, who as such held no high place in eighteenth-century society but need not now be decried – nor was it necessary even in the 1820s, one would think, to destroy the records of their colourful activities." As to the last part, the point is that Fanny believed her father to have been "nearly abandoned" as a child, and inherited his own lack of confidence about the social distance he had travelled. Worse was the fact that her mother, Dr Burney's first wife, was of lowly origins, a fact that the family for long carefully suppressed and whose revelation in the *Memoirs* was felt to threaten the advantageous marriage of Esther's son Richard.

Then there were the unwelcome events surrounding Fanny's own generation. Two of her half-sisters eloped with unsuitable men; in due course her nephew Martin was to contract a marriage with a person so "low" that it was kept from Fanny. Later Martin got into financial troubles, and indeed scarcely anyone in the family, Fanny included, was ever comfortably off. Her own favourite sister Susan had married Colonel Molesworth Phillips, the companion of Captain Cook on his last voyage. The family believed that Phillips, a high-living, improvident man, had driven Susan to an early grave. The sisters could never understand how it was that James permitted this "unfeeling wretch", house-room, and they resented the prominent part he took at their brother's funeral. But it was James himself who was responsible for the darkest of all secrets. For five years around the turn of the century he had gone to live with his half-sister Sarah Harriet, governess and novelist. This was so effectively set on that the relationship remained virtually unknown until recently: there is no hint of such an episode in Betty Scholer's chatty and in-

decently constructed life of Dr Burney (1948), though the doctor was severely shocked by this "heavy evil". Fanny herself wrote to Susan that "tis dark – dark! – though not, I humbly hope – black!" This can only mean that she trusted there was no sexual element in the undeniable infatuation of the couple. One cannot share her trust.

All these guilty secrets obviously fed the novelist's imagination, and it is one great merit of the edition to have shown us some of the private psychodramas enacted in the Burney household. Fanny was known by the time she was ten as "the Old Lady", and was nicknamed Miss Slyboots, rather later, by Arthur Murphy. Mrs Piozzi tells us that a game was played once to form a female administration, and Fanny wanted to know her post: at which Dr Johnson cried out, "Oh, we will send little Burney out for a spy." The inventor Merlin found out that Miss Burney "would not confess": and of course this bent for secrecy comes out in the elaborate precautions which surrounded the publication of *Evelina*.

It is this capacity for slyness, too, which perhaps accounts for Fanny's rather prevaricating conduct towards Mrs Piozzi. There is mention here of one letter as "the nearest thing to returning 'kindness' on [Mrs Piozzi's] part that this editor has seen": but whether Fanny performed any deep acts of kindness towards her is questionable. She pretended to hold the ring between Queeney Thrale and her mother, but she could never get beyond the judgmental towards Mrs Piozzi for various reasons. In the first place, she did not want to break her ties with the socially successful Queeney, that creature of quiet malice and untroubled self-possession. When Fanny writes of the older woman's "deserting her marital duties for [the] indulgence of passion", one is inclined to reply that it was Queeney who heartlessly deserted her mother. Then there is the second factor, Fanny's inability to accept a genuine sexual passion on Mrs Thrale's part, after her "suitable" but loveless first marriage. Besides, the musician Piozzi elicited Fanny's own deep feelings of insecurity over her father's position in society. Finally, Piozzi was simply a very nice man, and Fanny's criteria for masculine desert, though they stretched to the clever and the noble, didn't descend to mere niceness.

This splendid edition has already enhanced Fanny's reputation as a chronicler and observer of real life. Her account of a mastectomy operation she underwent in 1811 has acquired a kind of classic status, and many of her set

journals (though we already had some, in Charlotte Barrett's edition, like the diary of Waterloo and the Hundred Days) testify to her skill in working up old memories into fresh narrative form. More interesting is the question whether the letters will allow us to smuggle Fanny Burney into a more central place in literary history. *Evelina* has a secure place in the textbooks, though still along the lines of a good read and hardly as a significant development in the novel. *Cecilia* and, especially, *Camilla* have probably gone beyond recall: but one might have looked to *The Wanderer* to enjoy some revival of interest. The picture of "female difficulties" it provides has been written off as over-schematic, episodic, long-winded and moralistic. But maybe you have to be some or all of these things to break the mould of masculine fiction. Similar charges are levelled against Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman*.

To put it at its simplest: a rhetoric of fiction which sees marriage as the natural outcome of every plot is not going to be congenial to women who daily experience, or witness, the constraints of wedded life. It will suit men, who can discover identity or fulfillment in other avenues of living, or women like Jane Austen who are artful and morally tough-minded enough not to resent the self-abnegations imposed on a woman. In the most searching account yet written of Fanny Burney's art, *Imagining A Self* (1976), Patricia Mayer Spacks has written that "her fiction illustrates complex feminine identities of indirection". Spacks further speaks of "the literary possibilities of Miss Burney's principle of self-interpretation, and essentially dramatic view of her experience because it involves imagining goodness as precariously won and preserved and constantly to be defended rather than as an achieved state of being". What the letters and journals specifically show is a woman coping, resisting, struggling to integrate, inventing family and kinship where they were always liable to dissipate themselves in the open fields of society.

You need, by the way, to know the Burney family tree before you can locate it member in the index: the arrangement is not alphabetical but genealogical, so that you must traverse many columns from Fanny's own entry to that of her niece Fanny. But in this the masterful scholarship simply re-enacts the letter-writer's own efforts to preserve the Burney line against all outside interference, and so it is as appropriate as all the rest of the massively informative apparatus.

Communities in crisis

John Adlard

ELIZABETH LANGLAND
Society in the Novel
 267pp. University of North Carolina Press.
 £22.80.
 0807816043

In a generally tidy and fairly readable book Elizabeth Langland argues her thesis quietly, clearly, and sometimes convincingly. "Society", she tells us, "is something different for different novelists and novels, and the social inclusions depend as much on artistic needs as on unconscious influences. Furthermore, there exists a higher artistic purpose to which a novel's society is subordinated."

She has a useful chapter on Jane Austen, who "found society an ample context for individual fulfilment". Austen's characters almost all belong to a particular class, unlike those of Fielding, Thackeray and Dickens, who, to bring about "something resembling Austen's comic fulfilment", needed to find techniques that would enable them to exempt some characters from the probable effects of living in . . . a society that is ultimately inimical to freedom of individual movement and self-realization". She identifies these techniques. She also tells us that George Eliot, Hardy and Lawrence "believe in the idea of community, but its realization is increasingly precarious and remote", while "for Faulkner, Kafka, and Pynchon, the idea of society exists as only that: an idea in the minds of the characters".

In all this Professor Langland is convincing,

if sometimes rather wordy and dull. She does not convince when writing of novels in which, she claims, society is itself a protagonist. In such novels "we are involved with the fate of an entire social order, and it is one about which we are made to care". To make Barthes in *Bachelard Towers* such a protagonist is surely to see the creation of that society as an exercise in nostalgia, a long discredited view that ignores Andrew Wright's demonstration that "the mode of existence of the Chronicles of Barsetshire . . . is the outcome of an effort by which nightmare might be captured and controlled, reduced to manageable proportions".

Langland carries some conviction on the subject of *Wuthering Heights*, where society is transcended, but she tells us little that is new. "Brontë", she writes, "glimpses a life beyond man-created forms, and her novel explores its meaning through her protagonists' lives". Lord David Cecil put that with more grace fifty years ago.

In her last chapter she sets out to answer "some final questions". She fills six pages and introduces the Chinese *Dream of the Red Chamber* simply to tell us what must be clear to any intelligent person, that one is likely to be puzzled by, or to misunderstand, a novel from a different culture; then in five pages she considers, sometimes repeating herself, the shortcomings of Marxist critics. "Novelists", she concludes, "by their understanding, free themselves in part from the assumptions and limitations of their societies and align themselves with the universal." True, but undoubtedly a truth most of us knew already.

Family variables

Linda Taylor

KATHARINE MOORE
The Lotus House
 158pp. Allison and Busby. £7.95.
 0850316022
 DAPHNE GLAZER
Three Women
 207pp. Piatkus. £8.50.
 086188440X

Now that nuclear families are on the wane; now that women don't want to be wives; now that divorce is the rule; now that men are gay or impotent or obsolete; now that children are unsure whom they belong to, family life is developing infinitely variable dimensions. *The Lotus House* and *Three Women* portray two possible systems: the first for buttoned-up, psychologically unstable Southerners; the second for gregarious, breezy Northerners.

On a nostalgic whim, Letty Sanderson, in her sixties and recently widowed after a "late unromantic marriage" with her mother's doctor, determines to buy the Lotus House – the enchanting, double-fronted home of some distant cousins, that she had visited, enraptured, as a child: "It was a house well-suited for family life." Childless Letty, a solitary figure throughout her life, plans to have a post-menopausal family. The house is divided into flats: Letty occupies the spacious ground floor rooms; the Royces and daughter (Margot's though not Andrew's), Harriet, have the first floor; Aubrey Stacey, an English master (and would-be

author) is put on the top floor, and Miss Janet Cook, a retired post office official, goes in the basement. The new tenants share good references, respectability and frozen feelings. For the latter, Aubrey blames his brilliant twin brother; Miss Cook blames her mother whose "persistently admonishing voice" dogs her from the grave; Margot blames her parents' treatment of her as a pawn in their domestic disputes; Andrew blames his intellect; Harriet blames her sallow plumpness. "It was from this material that the innocent old Mrs Sanderson hoped to fashion a happy family group."

Letty is encouraged in her enterprise by her discovery of a shop that used to sell magic, and of her cousin Selena's old doll's house which is a replica of the Lotus House. Eight-year-old Harriet, ignored by her beautiful mother, begins to play out an imagined ideal life for herself with the dolls, a symbol of the game that the real dolls in her dream house. Growing up is painful: when Margot forgets to attend Harriet's school concert (music is the only thing that she is good at), Harriet smashes the doll's house to pieces with a hammer – "It's the bomb and it's killed them all dead!" she cries to Letty as she rushes out of the house in front of a van which breaks her leg and renders her unconscious for several days. Attention is focused; the selfish inhabitants begin to thaw, though Katharine Moore's strong sense of reality makes sure that this purge does not wholly revolutionize their stifled sensibilities. It takes the death of Aubrey's parents, the BBC's interest in Janet Cook's prize pelargonium, Mar-

got's nightmare in Cairo and Andrew's week spent looking after Harriet to further humanize them.

But when four television sets are switched on for Janet's debut in *Senior Starters* (this "family's" first shared act), Katharine Moore curiously turns against her characters:

Although probably not one of the inhabitants of the Lotus House would have bothered to look at a travel film that might have enlarged their visual experience and added to their knowledge, all were glued to the box on that summer evening to see Miss Cook, her garden and her plant against the background of their own home, which they could have seen and indeed did see, any and every day much better in reality.

The point, surely, is that they have not seen it "in reality" as their home until this moment: the television screen frames the unity of the Lotus House and crystallizes the small steps the tenants have made in their social education. (At moments like this, who cares about travel films?) Letty, like Moore, can't take it: her screen pops, and/or she has a heart attack.

While Katharine Moore is busy denouncing her own subtleties, Daphne Glazer is in the business of robust announcement. The "three women" in question – Linda, Sue (Linda's friend) and Cordelia (Linda's half-caste daughter) – are in the vanguard of social education. Radical feminist stereotypes, their appearances (and personalities) are designed to go against the feminine norm in a predictably anti-sexist way. Linda is ugly (and proudly pulls faces to illustrate this fact); Sue is six feet tall (and tends to go for wiry little men); Cordelia is voluptuously fat (and wears clingy materials to

accentuate it). One time "Housewife of the Year" with several husbands behind her, Linda is currently a virago in the antique business, and violently at odds with the rich, fat-cat dealer, Brocklesby. Sue, single and promiscuous, is an FE teacher, and at thirty-four wants to be a parent (though she can't find a "donor" and is too moral to lie). Cordelia, aged sixteen, a failure at school, writes a play which Sue thinks is pretty good, commenting solemnly: "with this present interest in women's drama, we could try to interest a women's group in it – perhaps a local one? Shall I make some enquiries?" With the exception of Brocklesby, the men in these women's lives are slim, small, gentle and not very successful: teachers, potters, musicians, unemployed.

Meanwhile, Brocklesby, the big bad wolf, goes to bed with Cordelia (she thinks he's yummy – he makes "her insides flip"), gets her pregnant and then offers to marry her. Linda, after a bout of terrible fury against him and her daughter, forgives them both and buries the old antique-dealing hatchet forever. In the end, they all go to Sue's wedding (yes, wedding) in Big B's jag. "Life can be magic", says Cordelia, "but you've got to let it be. It won't be if you don't believe."

There is something likeable, despite its ingenuous solemnity, about the cheerfulness of Daphne Glazer's version of life. This northern democratic "family" shares its babies and marriages as easily and generously as its tea and roll-ups. Back at the Lotus House, there is still a lot of work to be done.

rider in woods near her home ("The Horseman"); a girl witnesses the ghostly re-enactment of a long-ago murder ("The Secret Dancer"). The outstanding stories in the collection, however, are based on the inexplicability of violence and death. In "Easy Advice", a young mother is baffled by her husband's habitual cruelty; in "The Last Sandcastle", a man suffers a heart attack while playing with his small son on an otherwise deserted beach. The story describes his confused impressions as he dies, watched over by the uncomprehending child. In other cases, essential weaknesses mar the outcome. "Intrusion" features an arresting central image: an unknown woman, dressed in threadbare ballet costume, dancing alone to

taped music in a forest clearing. But her motives are never disclosed, and the story peters out disappointingly. A similar inconclusiveness undermines both "You Never Learn", whose opening enigma – the disappearance of a supposedly dead body – remains unexplained, and the notably stylish manner of "The Lake". More serious failures are the fatally uneven "While the Country Sleeps" and Leland's sole attempt at comedy, the over-long "In a Suburban Sitting-Room", which never really develops beyond its promising basic idea: a housewife persuading a succession of male visitors (including four policemen and a milkman) to pose nude for the mural with which she is covering her wall.

Divisions of state

Monty Haltrecht

NATHAN SHAHAM
The Other Side of the Wall: Three novellas.
 281pp. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America. \$13.95.
 082760225

The first of Nathan Shahan's three novellas reads like autobiography, so convincing is the detail, so thoroughly realized the narrator's consciousness: a delegate to a Zionist conference in Geneva, on the eve of the Second World War, escapes back to Palestine on an Egyptian ship sailing from Marseilles, and along the way writes love letters to another delegate who has returned to Poland, her fate, as yet uncertain, overshadowing the narrative.

Shahan was only fourteen in 1939, so it can't be his own story; nor can the last one, since in 1977, when this collection was first published in Hebrew, he was almost twenty years younger than the seventy-year-old central figure, a gnarled kibbutznik disastrously stranded, through a lost plane connection, in present-day New York.

The first novella is valuable as a document of the political reality of a particular time and place – the ferment of ideologies and sense of hair's-breadth survival leading to the eventual foundation of a Jewish state. But it is perhaps over-long and too detailed for the good of its human and emotional interest; story loses out to history. In the final novella New York comes across frighteningly in the vision of the old Kibbutznik, who is slipped into recollection.

The break-up of his first marriage is an image of the conflict and division within the new state – his ascetic idealism, appropriate to the pioneering days, has made him appear a figure from an outmoded past, as out of tune with the present as he is at odds with his unaccustomed new environment.

But it is the remarkable middle novella which gives the collection its title. In "The Other Side of the Wall" human interest transcends time and place – a plain, unloved girl, a bourgeois escapee not fully at home in the kibbutz either, becomes engulfed in the erotic overflow as, in the next room, beyond the thin partition, a beautiful married girl receives her lover. For the eavesdropper and observer it becomes a surrogate love affair. But when the only good is the good of the still-pioneering community, there is no leeway for deviance in private life: the affair is doomed. There is here a perfect balance between the personal and the historical, the perspective maintained through to the final bitter irony.

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Mick Imlah

PETER READING
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61pp. Secker and Warburg. £5.95.
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PETER READING and DAVID BUTLER
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0904461 831

Intimations of *C* – Peter Reading's brilliant but ruthless new book of "poems" about cancer – are to be found in the pamphlet 5x5x5x5x5, produced last year in collaboration with the Sunderland artist David Butler. In five sections, each of five poems, each of five stanzas, each of five lines, each of five syllables, we meet five dismal drunkards in the "Railway Hotel", each of whom suffers some more or less terminal misadventure before the end. Jock, for instance, is a noisy Poly second-year, a rugby braggart with "too much confidence, / no respectful fright / or awareness, yet, / of mortality". He is heavily tackled in a spontaneous rugby fantasy of our author's (scribed on a beermat) and chokes to death on his gumshield. A few pages later, though, Reading has compassionate second thoughts, and brings in a surgeon to help repair the MS damage: "Tipp-ex and scalpel / joined forces to clear / a throat obstruction." Jock's life is restored on one utterly disabling condition: "EX-SCOTTISH PATIENT / EXHUMED AS ENGLISH". Meanwhile, a daft logician has been amusingly destroyed by a "sub-species" of skinhead in the pub bog.

We look on these kinds of death and pain as the legitimate fictions of the light-verse black comedian; grotesque retribution on those who are only invented to deserve it, redeemable in joke resurrections. In 5', poet and surgeon alike have the power of life and death; in *C*, by a bold intensification of its author's morbidity, poet and surgeon have no power at all. The difference in atmosphere is pointed by the presence in each book of a stock Reading figure; when the weak-hearted palaeontologist comforts himself in 5', "What's 40 years / here or there on the / chronostratigraph?" he sounds drunk, but when the cancerous palaeontologist comforts himself in *C*, with the same phrase, he sounds insane.

C is an even more demanding numerological structure. It pretends to be the work of a ver-ifying cancer victim, charting his last 100 days in 100 units each of 100 words; and around this central figure Reading builds fossil layers of "poor frail dear frightened little vulnerable creatures" dying in isolation (the excellent acrostic "IN THE SAME VERTICAL COLUMN" follows five storeys of hospital suffering down to the stoker in the basement). The strange excitement of the book lies in the in-appropriateness of the admirable design, and especially of the medium of verse, to such a very unitary subject. Verse, indeed, is *C*'s first casualty: "Verse is for healthy / arty-farties, The dying / and surgeons' use prose" chimes an early haiku; and prose subsequently outweighs verse three to one. Where they survive, verse forms are gruesomely misapplied, so that we relish all the more their impotence to explain, console, or cure. There is a sixteen-liner on bedsores (from two angles); a limerick plus "cutely-adapted Adonic" for fatal haemorrhage; cateleotic (truncated) tetrameters to lament cut-off breasts; a Japanese sonnet on a "stiff" in the chip shop; the thirteen-line sonnet, invented "for unlucky people" in general; and a limerick with "pretty Choriamb" to hymn the after-effects of a botched colostomy. In a different admission of verse's inadequacy, other pieces are hidden away in prose settings; as the stunned craftsman instructs himself, "Run them together, set as justified prose, / the inadequately blank pentameters". Harder puns than these link the breakdown of verse and body. Can metre and punctuation contain the leakage of collapsed bowels? No – "pentameters, like colons, inadequate". Likewise, after the operation, "ars" is "brays".

Still, we ought to detach Reading's *ars* from the *ars* of his persona. Its most apparently reductive flourishes are carefully placed and prepared for. The last words on verse, for example, are spoken by the tramp Tucker who, in various guises, and in contrived partnerships

with the "pale horse" from Revelation, attends gloatingly on death throughout. Watching another one borne away in an ambulance, he pulls at a whisky bottle (White Horse) and guffaws a perfect pentameter: Ha há / ha há / ha há / ha há / ha há.

– and perfect that unambiguously is. Besides, verse is not uniquely picked on by the impartial cancer. "Not just me, but all of us . . ."; not just the poet, but the palaeontologist too. These instructions for home care show food and clothing to be just as "incongruous":

Phrase questions to receive very simple answers, e.g.: "There is jelly and ice cream or egg custard – would you like jelly and ice cream?" Pyjamas should be absorbent.

So Reading, with a barrage of "Shit, blood, puke", etc, takes us as close to the facts of disease as any work of literature – including the medical dictionary which supplies some of his text – is likely to want to do. He has no interest in the distancing demeanour which more reverent poets might adopt to deal with dying subjects; the dying "hate" us (Reading's word) and want our life, not our verse. His solution – sick in its way, no doubt – is to join them, posing as "the Master of the 100 100-Word Units" who "chronicles his death in the third Person" in a game which is deadlier by far than the average earnestness. His daring even induces a certain dread for his health – a peculiar achievement for imaginative writing. Section Eighty-seven, a letter to his publishers (advising them chirpily that it forms part of his last book, and that he is dead as they read it) is awesomely unsuperstitious: "P.S. Seriously though, my wife will deal with proof correction." More than Reading's, though, our own health concerns us, and the book tweaks and probes at the general anxiety. One of its truest episodes is that of a victim, not of cancer, but of fear of it, who kills herself with twenty pills in Section Forty-four. There is the merest shadow of an ironic triumph in the fact that our nameless hero, who contemplates a bowery Virgilian suicide throughout, and collects the same twenty pills, is too weak by the close – too nearly dead – to do the job. And if the book's coda displaces poetical emphasis, nevertheless it borrows something of poetry's affirmative habit as it moves unexpectedly to its muted ten-thousandth word: "My wife patiently washes my face-besmirched pyjamas, for prosaic love."

Jail psalms

Dennis Deletant

ZAHUPANĂ (Editor)
Poezii din închisoare
569pp. Ontario: Cuvîntul Romanesc. \$20.
0919871003

The imposition of Stalin's rule in Romania after 1944 brought with it the dissolution of all opposition parties and the incarceration of all those who did not accept the communist yoke. At its height in the early 1950s the prison population reached a quarter of a million. The inhuman conditions of the labour camps, the most notorious of which were construction sites for the Black Sea canal, are said to have claimed about 100,000 lives. The sufferings of prisoners in the antiquated and overcrowded jails were compounded for many by the denial of exercise for mind and body in any form, even in the prison factory.

For relief from the torment and drudgery of prison life the inmates often recited literature from memory. The novels of Dumas père, Dickens, R. L. Stevenson, Somerset Maugham and A. J. Cronin, and the stories of Stefan Zweig and Thomas Mann were popular; to the repertoire of established Romanian poetry was added the contemporary verse composed in the jails themselves, whose repressiveness spawned a revival of the oral tradition in Romanian poetry which enabled this remarkable new verse to survive. The "field-work" of such editors as Victor Băescu, Viștiti Floria, Vasile Poștăcel and Zăbu Păuș in transcribing these poems is reflected in this anthology of prison verse, the most representative of its kind.

Not one of the poems presented here has been published in Romania. Radu Gyr, a respected poet in the inter-war years, remains a non-person although he died ten years ago after fifteen years in prison. Nichifor Crainic was only restored to reference works as a result of his acceptance of the editorship of a propaganda journal directed at Romanian exiles (a condition of his release in 1962).

Gyr will remain the psalmist of the Romanian political prisoner's experience, as for example in "Last night Jesus came into my cell":

His hands seemed like lilies on graves,
His eyes as deep as forests.
The moon gave His vestments the sheen of silver,
Blanching the old wounds in His hands.

With a groan He rested His tormented bones
On my mat of rush with the cockroaches.
He radiated light but the heavy cell-bars
Drew their pattern of stripes on His incandescence.

When I awoke from the terrible abyss
The straw had the perfume of roses.
I was in the cell, the moonlight with me,
Only Jesus was nowhere.

"Where are you, Lord?"
I screamed through the bars.
From the moonlight came smoke of a censor.
I felt my body, and on my hands
I found the wounds of His nails.

The above extract is my own translation since all the poems presented here are in Romanian. Unfortunately, it conveys little of the music and the intensity of the original which imparts a feeling of powerlessness in the face of suffering.

This volume is the distillation of a collective agony. The memory of the two decades following Romania's "liberation" remains unexorcized by the present régime and still haunts the minds of older generations; reading these poems we can understand why

translations of grief come over in iambic pentameters which sometimes achieve a drumming neo-Emponian starkness, and are at other times close to the kind of sub-Emponian facility which used to be a distinguishing sign of weaker poems of the Movement. "Timer" ends with a factiously spun-out routine, exploiting a pathos of remembered detail, in which the compulsions of rhyming closure are more evident than any urgencies of grieving:

I feel your ashes, head, arms, breasts, womb, legs,
sift through its circle slowly, like that thing
you used to let me watch to time the eggs.

Some of the attempts in these poems to blend the parents' Yorkshire speech with the stylish sweep of Harrison's own metrical fluencies seem affected or patronizing, or else over-strenuously willed or wilful. But at their best the poems in this idiom have a tender truthfulness, and Leeds, the place where he grew up, is a vividly evoked presence, throughout the volume.

The earlier poems in the book have more exotic settings: Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe. There are Greenlandish evocations of post-colonial sleaziness and some Mac Neice-like portraits of old lechers, like the PWD man who loves black girls:

I don't do bad for sixty. You can stuff your Welfare State,
You can't get girls on National Health and I won't masturbate.
They're pleased with my performance. I'm satisfied with theirs.

He dies in an ecstasy of imperial punning, and a sense of systolic drumbeats worthy of *Henderson the Rain King*: "Nay! Come on, Julius Sel-zure, you black, buck bastard come. / I can hear those muffled heartbeats like a Yoruba drum." His body is ravaged by diseases that replay imperial maps ("My belly's like a blow-up globe all blotched with Empire red"). Another poem, "The Foreign Body", describes a bout of gonorrhoea with raucous, rhapsodic exuberance, the galloping cells ravaging the body in an orgy of politico-sexual analogy:

Desperately I call these app-rehensions Africa but the map churns like wet acres in these rains and thunder tugging at my veins.
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The lyricism of diseased cells germinating or flowering in the body has become a bit of a sub-genre since the far-off days of Richard Eberhart's "The Cancer Cells". Harrison blends this with a routine in which the body turns into a mental map. Sexuality tends to be colonial-geographic:

Mon égal
Let me be the Gambia
in your Senegal.

There is a good deal of such multilingual punning ("Je suis le ténébreux . . . le veuf . . . / always the *solxante* and never the *neuf*"; "I'd like to / *sukuru* / you"). It's part of a long-standing playful-pedantic word-awareness, fascinated by dictionaries and language-learning, including the classical languages of which Harrison has long been a student and a distinguished translator.

A strong satirical note runs through the book. Sometimes it seems uncoordinated, flailing this way and that, as in some of the sexual/imperial rhapsodizing. By contrast, the poems about Audubon and about the American bald eagle from "Art & Extinction" have a wry power. The pastiche "Oh, Moon of Mahagonny!" on the irony of "a big soke" thrown by the Rockefellers "for the cast of *Mahagonny* by Brecht/Weill" is inventively funny, as is "The Call of Nature", about tourists who visit the Lawrence shrine at Taos and its native "pueblo people".

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The volume also contains Harrison's versions from Palladas, one of the poets of the *Greek Anthology*, who is sometimes foolishly described as Swiftian. The Anvil Press has released these versions, first published in 1975, as a separate volume. This is worth having for Harrison's eloquent and informative introduction and notes, not reproduced in the *Selected Poems*, but the testy resentments of this waspish Hellenic pedagogy don't for the most part bring out Harrison's best writing.

Older poems in his anthology
written in his greatest
English, remain more apt and accurate

Claude Rawson

TONY HARRISON
Selected Poems
203pp. Viking. £9.95 (paperback, Penguin, £3.50).
0670 800406
Palladas: Poems
48pp. Anvil. £2.95.
085646 127 X

The epigraph to a section of Tony Harrison's *Selected Poems* is called "Hereditry" and asks where he got his talent from. The answer is "I had two uncles, Joe and Harry – / one was a stammerer, the other dumb". The note is characteristic, both thrusting and coy. The poems sometimes embarrass by their self-cherishing, but the energies of a strong talent are seldom far away. The two uncles come to a vivid life in other poems, in proportion as they detach themselves from Harrison's fond self-mythologizing:

Uncle Joe. Impediment spurred him,
the worst stammerer I've known, to be a printer.
He handset type much faster than he spoke.
Those cruel consonants, *ms*, *ps*, and *bs*
on which his jaws and spirit almost broke
flicked into order with sadistic ease;

and "Uncle Harry, most eloquent deaf-mute" jabbing against the dictionary "till it leaped to life / when there were Tory errors to confute".

His family occupies a high proportion of this book. They are not all "characters", like the two uncles, and a violent sadness usually attaches to them. A poem about his daughter's birth is a frenetic phantasmagoria of anxiety and elation, anticipating her later maiming in a road accident, an event which reappears with eruptive poignancy in several subsequent poems. Perhaps the best-known poems here are a series of sixteen-line "sonnets" on the death of his parents, of which the most affecting is "Long Distance, II", about how his widowed father used to conduct an elaborate and surreptitious pretence that his wife was still alive, and how the poet himself becomes caught up in the same sad exercise:

You haven't both gone shopping; just the same,
in my new black leather phone book there's your name
and the disconnected number I still call.

There is in these poems a striking mixture of emotional vigour and patness. The formula-

tions of grief come over in iambic pentameters which sometimes achieve a drumming neo-Emponian starkness, and are at other times close to the kind of sub-Emponian facility which used to be a distinguishing sign of weaker poems of the Movement. "Timer" ends with a factiously spun-out routine, exploiting a pathos of remembered detail, in which the compulsions of rhyming closure are more evident than any urgencies of grieving:

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Older poems in his anthology
written in his greatest
English, remain more apt and accurate

Word

I

Women offer mastery
Of night. The quiet
Recording of beetles in the wood
Like writers in libraries.
A child's little hand
Cool as mushrooms. A black
Beard like a curse just uttered
Congealing about his lips.
He strikes her, the night
Explodes in needle sparks.

II

The fresh smell comes off
The lawn before the rain,
Prefiguring the rain,
The grass answers with perfume
To the tension of the clouds.
I turn on full the mains
Cold water and rinse the memory
Of the blow off my hands again and again.

III

The bees, drinking,
Settle on the wet mud. The swan
Scales the stepped air
With buffeting wings,
The booming geese
Voyage on in their long clothes.
I stepped in deep mud,
My whole leg, its perfume
Unfolded, the wet
Groaned like the vaults of night
To the flight of sheer geese.
The child with her hand
Cool as mushrooms
Grips mine, with her
Wholesome skintsmell, of what

IV

Is she made?
The evening shadows
Grow like a beard from the trees,
A tangled beard. It needs
A grown woman to give mastery
To the night. The beetles
Devour with the sound of nibs,
Forming their oval tomes
The scroll in the vase of skin
Beneath the carapace,
The potter's wheel with its chafing sound
In glossy carapace
Whose freshness is its tome,
Its theme. By no means
Is this blackness a curse
To the mastery of a grown woman.

V

Who teaches the little death
With its needle constellations, its
Relaxation into new substances
And metals of night and its memory
Rinsed clean, the tomb
Sealed only as a potent book
Not to be split before time,
Not before the blast of death
Has ceased exploding
Its too-great mudsmells,
The soul stands in a tall
Bell that is ringing still, escapes
In carillons of night-smells
Pleasing to God whose skin

VI

Is everywhere and never dies. Consider
The little deaths like tottering steps,
The mastery of walking offered,
Of reading and of parable,
Offered by the grown woman, mastery

VII

Of the great skin-bound book
Wrenched open, pouring forth
Its smells of glue and ink.
The echoes of its tales
Sparkling like mushrooms
In the wet fields or the hands
Of children, the words
Walking through the dew or drinking it,
The words in white wings
Scaling the broad stairs of the dusk,
The words spreading in round echoes,
The snow-capped geese burst
Out of the bone-bound book entitled
White in yolk and feathers.

PETER REDGROVE

Notes For The Park Keeper

They've put the park bench
too near the pond. Lovers could drown
if the drains backed up. There's
a touching Chinese look to the plants
bordering the council flats. Perhaps
the gardener's a Buddhist but
he's far too trusting. His bamboo patch
has been flattened into a speedway track
for chopper bikes. That bench

sometimes doubles as a raft. Kids
use it to fish for eels. They get
twenty pence each from Presto's so
they climb the railings at night
to gaff by flashlight and to carve
graffiti into the picnic logs –
DUFFY FOR CHELSEA...NIG-NOGS
GO HOME...and, strangest of all,
PICASSO PAINTS WITH HIS COCK.

...

The park's Victorian wrought-iron gates
are beginning to look like a cage
(shades of old 'class barriers'). That
and the bandmen's buttoned-up uniforms
(deck-chairs in regimental rows)
give the place a 19th-century ambience

that stiffens each evening as shadows spread
heavy gothic lines. A picket fence
could be less inhibiting
while a sprinkling of violins and bare arms
might add a small bohemian gesture
to the bandstand's blatant military blare.

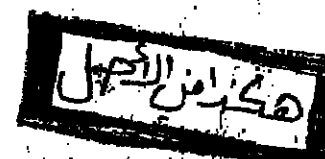
...

Water's essential to the public's sense
of nature at peace with itself.
It's what we expect to see –
air, water, light, all meeting here
in 'a marriage of earth and sky'.

The fountain's gone in the new council cuts –
which limits both ear and eye
(and how the tongue loved something cool
coming straight out of the ground). But
if they pruned the plane trees further back

then a view of the river would linger on
past Harrods' Depository – the one
with the domes and union-jacks
that houses a dusty Empire
of forgotten furniture and cabin trunks.

PETER BLAND



Letters

The Essence of Swissness

Sir, — George Steiner (December 7), as he heaps praise on Switzerland, asserts that the country has been "uncannily spared" from class conflict. Yet only a few hundred yards from where he teaches at the University of Geneva lies a stark if modest monument to a major massacre of workers that took place in Geneva in 1932. The occasion was an unemployment demonstration in an open area close to the university. The Swiss army, which was present to help the police keep order, opened fire, twelve workers were shot dead and sixty wounded. I use the description "major massacre" because there has been no other equivalent killing this century of unarmed, peacefully demonstrating workers by the army of a democracy. If you scale it up in proportion to the population of Britain it would mean the death of about 150 people in Trafalgar Square and such an event would have become one of the central historic factors in twentieth-century British history.

The Geneva massacre represented the end of almost three decades of unremitting class struggle. In 1907, the Swiss army moved up its cannon to threaten women workers occupying a chocolate factory in Neuchâtel. In 1918, a revolutionary general strike took place and the 1920s saw regular and violent industrial action in many parts of Switzerland. Following the 1932 massacre, a Communist government was elected in Geneva between 1933 and 1936 — again, I think, the only example in the 1930s of the Communists taking control through the ballot-box of a major West European city.

This unremitting social tension was resolved in 1937 with the signing of the so-called "Peace Treaty" between the Swiss Watch and Metal-workers Union and the metal employers. Both sides agreed to forsake strikes and lock-outs and to opt for a peaceful settlement of their disputes. In effect, it meant that the employers gave up their commitment to break working-class organization and agreed to accept unions fully as social partners. This also spread to the political field and has resulted in the coalition system — the famous "magic formula" — that has ruled Switzerland at so many different levels ever since.

Many of your other writers in your excellent issue on Switzerland (quite the best compilation I have read in English on the country in the five years I have lived here) dismiss the Swiss unions as co-operative, compliant and, by implication, a model for what trades-unionism should be in Britain and elsewhere. In fact,

they have won much for their members and are accepted as full partners in a country which, for all its propaganda about capitalist freedoms, has one of the most regulated labour markets in the non-Communist world, gives workers and unions legal and contractual rights which would be anathema to Mrs Thatcher or President Reagan, and, above all, accepts that a full-employment economy and a steadily rising standard of life for working people is the best way to guarantee prosperity and social stability.

But it needed many years of class struggle, including loss of life, before this state of affairs came about. The most fascinating aspect of contemporary Swiss political and economic relations is to see the struggle between those who would like to Reaganize or Thatcherize such relations and those fighting to hang on to the post-1930s model of co-operation and partnership.

DENIS MACSHANE.
2 route de Loex, 1213 Geneva.

E. H. Norman

Sir, — In his review (December 21) of Roger W. Bowen's volume of essays on the life and scholarship of E. H. Norman, Bernard Ostry seems to accept without question the reports of agents of the FBI concerning Norman's attempt to act upon the request of his friend Shigeto Tsuru that he take custody of books and papers left in Cambridge, Massachusetts, when Tsuru was interned after Pearl Harbor and subsequently repatriated to Japan in 1942. Two points are relevant and important in this connection: (1) the facts alleged by the FBI have never been scrutinized in an open court in the presence of a jury and Herbert Norman's own version of events has never been heard; (2) the FBI, though never witch-hunters, were affected by a bias against communists, socialists, "premature" anti-fascists and most people disposed to think for themselves on political topics.

My version of the Tsuru-Norman relationship presented in *Reading from Left to Right* (University of Toronto Press, 1983), pp 218-220, differs from that of the FBI. While it suffers from being one man's recollection of what another man told him in 1943, it has the merit of being based on Herbert Norman's own statement made in private to a close friend under no pressure and fourteen years before Tsuru's apology to the US Senate contributed to his friend's death. I do not know what caused Herbert Norman's suicide, but I am willing to suppose that sorrow was a factor.

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Julia Briggs's *This Stage-Play World: English literature and its background 1580-1625* was published in 1983. Victor Brombert's *Victor Hugo and the Visionary Novel* will be reviewed shortly in the TLS. T. A. J. Burnett is Assistant Keeper of Manuscripts at the British Library. Michael Butler's *The Plays of Max Frisch* will be published in the spring. Rupert Bruce-Milford is the editor of *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial*, Volume 1, 1975, Volume 2, 1978 and Volume 3, 1983. Terence Cave is the author of *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of writing in the French Renaissance, 1579-1600*. John L. Flood is Deputy Director of the Institute of German Studies at the University of London. M. W. Greenfield is editor of the Victoria County History of Staffordshire. Michael Hofmann's book of poems, *Nights in The Iron Hotel*, was published last year. Christopher Holdsworth is Professor of Medieval History at the University of Exeter. Andrew Hurrell is a research lecturer in International Relations at Christ Church, Oxford. Michael Ignatieff's latest book, *The Needs of Strangers*, was reviewed in the TLS two weeks ago. Mick Jinish is the editor of *Poetry Review*. Brian Johnson's books include *The World Energy Triangle*, 1983. Leszek Kolakowski's *Main Currents of Marxism* was published, in three volumes, in 1978. Alastair Laing is co-author, with Anthony Blunt, of *Baroque and Rococo: Architecture and decoration*, 1978. Tony Lambert was formerly a lecturer in Spanish at the University of Southampton. Gordon K. Lewis's *Main Currents in Caribbean Thought, 1492-1900* will be reviewed shortly in the TLS. Roland Littlewood is the co-author (with Maurice Lippege) of *Allens and Allentists*, 1982. J. R. Maddelott is a Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford. Patrick McCarthy is the author of *Camus: A critical study of his life and work*, 1982. P. H. Matthews is Professor of Linguistics at the University of Cambridge. Geoffrey Norrie's *Rakhmaninov* was published in 1976. Christopher Peacocke is a Fellow of New College, Oxford. Claude Rawson is the author of *Gulliver and the Gentle Reader: Studies in Swift and our times*, 1973. W. D. Redfern's *Piers* will be reviewed shortly in the TLS. Peter Redgrove's collection of poems *The Working of Water* has just been published. Pat Rogers is completing a biography of Sir Joshua Reynolds. Geoffrey Scammell is the author of *The Great Chartered Trading Companies and the Sea*, 1983. Philip Thody is Professor of French Literature at the University of Leeds. Colin Thubron's books include *Journey into Cyprus*, 1975, and *Among the Russians*, 1984. Keith Wrightson's most recent book is *English Society 1580-1680*, 1982.

COMMENTARY

Multiple indignities

Geoffrey Norris

P. I. TCHAIKOVSKY
Mazeppa
Coliseum

Mazeppa may not be front-rank Tchaikovsky from the point of view of characterization, but musically and dramatically there are sufficient high-spots to warrant the occasional staging. As such, the work was an ideal candidate for the English National Opera's Norwest Holst series (launched in 1983 with Wagner's *Ring* and continuing next season with Rossini's *Mosè in Egitto*), in which important but neglected operas are produced within a restricted budget, money being saved on sets and chorus rehearsal time. At the end of its limited run next week, *Mazeppa* will be dismantled and its props presumably dispersed elsewhere.

The costumes, at least, should present few problems of redistribution, for they seem in any case to have walked in from a variety of other operas, of widely differing nationalities and periods. Here, frock-coated clerks rub shoulders with suavely suited 1950s gents; drably-dressed babushki from Boris Godunov are confronted by "Cossacks" with flamethrowers and industrial protective clothing; and the conventional trench-coated, trilby-hatted henchmen in Acts 1 and 2 hardly prepare you for the symbolic, science-fiction survivors of battle in Act 3, all with heads and faces entirely swathed in bandages and all crawling along with suitcases.

These could well be interpreted as gestures

of history repeating itself, a representation of the fact that every age suffers to some extent from the rigours of ruthless personal or political domination, for it will quickly become clear that the producer David Alden has taken Tchaikovsky's declared setting — "The Ukraine, early Eighteenth Century" — and re-worked it liberally. The libretto, derived by Viktor Burenin and the composer himself from Pushkin's poem *Poltava*, concerns the triangular, historically accurate conflict between Peter the Great, Charles XII of Sweden and Mazeppa, hetman of the Ukraine. To tighten the screw of divided loyalty, Mazeppa yearns to marry his god-daughter Maria, whose father Kochubey vengefully blabs to the tsar about Mazeppa's plans to form an alliance with the Swedish king but is rewarded only by being handed over to Mazeppa, who executes him. Mazeppa is then routed at the Battle of Poltava; he kills Maria's lifelong love Andrei; and Maria herself, now deserted by Mazeppa, goes mad and sings a lullaby over (or, in this production, under) Andrei's body.

For Andrei is by this time hanging limply (and apparently dead) from the hook on which Mazeppa's side-kick has suspended him. It is the culmination of a production marked by gruesome, gangster-like brutality. Far from evoking any specifically eighteenth-century Ukrainian local colour, Alden has chosen to bring the opera up to date to some generalized era of Stalinist/American organized crime, all couched in a set which at first looks like a hospital waiting-room, complete with blinding fluorescent lights, wash-basin and Ascot water-heater, rows of chairs for the patients and a Hospital Friends' tea-trolley, but which

is probably intended merely to be a theatrical rehearsal area. The hospital image is reinforced in Act 2, where Maria (for no readily discernible dramatic reason) spends the whole of the first scene — "A Cell in the Belotserkovsky Palace" — asleep in an iron-framed bed, while her father Kochubey is being savagely interrogated onstage. Here the Ascot water-heater comes into its own. The jailers, looking like bank-robbers in striped balaclavas, extend a tube to Kochubey's mouth. Whether they are gassing him or pouring hot water down his throat is unclear; but the indignities he suffers here are as nought compared with his execution, bloodily done (behind a screen) by means of a chain-saw.

Such reinterpretation and relocation of the opera would be more acceptable and perhaps more pointed were they not so often at odds with the text and the music. True, we are often required to suspend disbelief in opera, but how can a group of surly, burly, 1950s thugs be addressed with the line "Your sabres to their

Festive fantods

Julia Briggs

The Box of Delights
BBC1

John Masefield's two children's books, *The Midnight Folk* and *The Box of Delights*, are perhaps his most sustained poetic achievements. Traditional fairy-tale creatures — witches, talking animals, King Arthur's knights — mix with images from his childhood in and around Ledbury and with elements of his other fictions to create a vividly convincing inner world. Both books seem to enact a child's imaginings, but *The Box of Delights* is the more fantastic, and indeed the child Kay's experiences are shown at the end, to have been no more than a dream. The climax of the story in the celebration of the thousandth Christmas mass at Tatchester Cathedral makes it especially suitable for performance at Christmas, and there was a popular radio version some years ago by John Keir Cross; but its many magical happenings present obvious challenges for television. The BBC's recent production is itself something of a box of delights, lavish in its use of appropriate locations and special effects — only the sudden snowfall of the final episode is obviously of polystyrene. Cartoons (using computer graphics) mingle well with some beautiful outdoor photography, and the costumes and period flavour are, as usual, exact. Generosity fails only in the time allotted to the production — three hours is not really quite enough to unfold such a complicated plot with ease.

This version wisely keeps to Masefield's dialogue for the most part, including Peter's extraordinary (invented?) schoolboy slang: of a

creepy place, "It gives me the fantods", and (with indignation) "I think it's the purple pin". The only addition of any substance predictably turns out to be a mistake, out of keeping with the narrative and conspicuously clumsy: at one point in the book Kay elects to go back into the past in an effort to return the magic box to its original maker, Arnold of Todi. Arnold is amiable but uncooperative, a disorientated hermit who turns up at the Cathedral for the joyous finale. In an unnecessary and factitious attempt to introduce further suspense, the television version has him suddenly turn on Kay and smite him with lightning. Had this episode been cut altogether (and the visit to the past is so foreshortened as not to make a great deal of sense anyway) it might have provided time for the scene where the old magician, Cole Hawlings, shows each child his heart's delight — not only an enchanting sequence but one that establishes the children's characters early in the story. Here the serial form obviously imposes its procrustean restraints.

One of the box's powers is to make you go small, and the episode where Kay and his friends escape the villains by sailing down the mill-stream on his toy yacht is genuinely magical. So, in another sense, are the snow scenes, the trains and cars, the white-capped maids and Fair Isle jumpers of the 1930s, now distanced to a never-never land. The children are perfectly cast — Kay looks stolid enough to be taken for a miff without being one, and the much-expelled Maria steals the show (as she does in the book). Patrick Troughton and Robert Stephens are excellent as the good and bad magicians respectively — the former looking a little young for his 700 years, the latter overacting outrageously, just as in the book. And, like the book itself, it is all as rich as Christmas pudding, and quite as good.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 207
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow, and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than January 25. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that, the most nearly correct.

Enrich, marked "Author, Author 207" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX.

1. I should not answer questionnaires Or quizzes upon World Affairs.

Nor with complacence

Take any test, Thou shalt not sit

With statisticians nor commit.

A social science.

2. Now like all of us watching quiz shows I would call out the answers I knew, trying to beat the contestant out there in Never Never Land. "Mrs Gunmidge Parashellon! Reciprocity engine! Dante Gabriel Rossetti!" I would bark. "Ull Amy found more entertainment watching me than she did the show."

3. Any Baron who wished to be considered King was allowed to apply at Warwick the Kingmaker's and fill up a form:

Have you been King before? If so, state how many times; also whether deposed, beheaded or died of stroke.

Have you had the Black Death?

Competition No 203
Winner: M. W. Grose

Answers:

1. This did I by the Water's brink
Another World beneath me think:
And while the lofty spacious Skies
Revealed there abode, mloe Byes,
I fancy'd other Feet

Came mine to touch or meet;

As by some Puddle I did play

Another World within it lay.

Thomas Traherne, "Shadow on the Water".

2. Do you see the great telephone poles down in the water, how every wire is distinct?

If a body fell into the canal it would rest entangled in those wires for ever, between earth and air.

For the water is as deep as the stars are high.

James Elroy Flecker, "Oxford Canal".

3. The cow and horse tracks in the road were full of water, the rain having been enough to charge them, but not enough to wash them away. Across these minutes pools the reflected stars lifted in a quick transit as she passed; she would not have known they were shining overhead if she had not seen them there — the vastest things of the universe imaged in objects so mean.

Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, chapter 35.

Anthology milestones

Peter Kemp

Six Centuries of Verse
Thames TV

In the book accompanying his television series, *Six Centuries of Verse* (290pp. Thames-Methuen. £12.50; paperback, £4.95. 0 423 00950 8), Anthony Thwaite deplores the fact that "the English in general do seem embarrassed" by poetry. Channel 4's sixteen programmes, though, don't always seem designed to allay this feeling. Suspicions that poetry is something de luxe or chi-chi aren't likely to be dispelled by the spectacle of John Gielgud intoning the commentary to the series in a reverent recitative — all self-conscious vowel-music and mellifluous tremolo — against a background of fine bindings in a country house library. Performances of poems can be off-putting, too. Languid mouthings from Ian Richardson leave lines pallid and lifeless. American verse receives recurrent maltreatment as Stacy Keach smoothes poem after poem under a catarrhal drone.

Luckily, however, there's more to the programmes than stiffness. A number of the readers excel at making poetry affecting by keeping it unaffected. Performances such as Peggy Ashcroft's spirited two-voiced rendering of Hardy's "The Ruined Maid", or recitals of Yeats and Dylan Thomas by Cyril Cusack and Anthony Hopkins that give the lines just the right degree of regional accent and intonation; bring poems speakingly to life in full, idiosyncratic vigour. Especially good is Nicholas Gecks, who gives powerful, subtle readings of a wide range of works — from an almost literally dashing account of Rochester's "A Salvo Against Reason and Mankind" to an arresting, aghast delivery of Owen's "Anthem for Doomed Youth". Most outstanding of all, perhaps, is his version of Chidlock Tichborne's lament "Written the Night Before His Execution" — where the choking bitterness of a young man facing early death is conveyed in a harrowing near-growl and with a rhythm that acutely stresses the way the caesuras chop down, with hideous aptness, through the body of the poem: "My thread is cut, and yet it is not spun; And now I live, and now my life is done."

The series is often at its best, as here, with lesser-known or unexpected pieces. Poet "The City in the Sea" is given a spine-tingling

rendering by Lee Remick standing against a snowy landscape. Whiteness accompanies her other performances, too: a stirring delivery of Julia Ward Howe's "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" from a pulpit in the white-washed interior of a white-steeped New England church; readings of Emily Dickinson's poems in the poet's house at Amherst with its blanching swathes of lace curtain, white paint-work and milky porcelain-shaded lamps.

Listening to Dickinson's "blat" verse recited among her straight-backed furniture puts it interestingly in context. And the programmes specialize in similarly informative settings. Some of Wordsworth's poetry is spoken in his homes, Dove Cottage and Rydal Mount. For Book One of *The Prelude*, Julian Glover gamely embarks in an equivalent to the poet's "elfin pinnace", dipping his oars into the silent lake as the "black and huge" peak looms over him — though for the ice-skating sequence, prints have to be fallen back on. Paintings and portraits, sketches and photographs, all skilfully selected, add a great deal to these programmes; even political cartoons are shrewdly used — to show what lies behind Shelley's "The Mask of Anarchy".

What's seen, in fact, can sometimes be more striking than what's heard — partly because the majority of poetry selected for the survey tends to constitute a predictable line-up of anthology milestones. Most disappointingly unadventurous is the Shakespeare programme. Giving little sense of his development and range, it settles for familiar speeches from the better-known plays rather than staidly elocuted among formal gardens and topiary.

When not hedged in by conventionality, the series can occasionally lurch to the opposing extreme of eccentricity. Oddest of all perhaps is the decision — in a survey that omits Spenser — to make room for several lengthy pages from that cat-lover's catalogue, Christopher Smart's apostrophe to his mouse, Jeffrey. Bizarrely, Smart gets more space than Browning. Teeny-teeny, too, is only meagrely represented — by a smattering of selections from *In Memoriam*. In its two programmes devoted to the twentieth century, the survey can seem even more lopsided: no Wallace Stevens, no Sylvia Plath. And, though supposedly charting poetry up to the present, it rather unenterprisingly stops short at Larkin and Hughes — with whose "The Thought-Fox", written about a quarter of a century ago, it prematurely concludes.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 207
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow, and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than January 25. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that, the most nearly correct.

Enrich, marked "Author, Author 207" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX.

1. I should not answer questionnaires Or quizzes upon World Affairs.

Nor with complacence

Take any test, Thou shalt not sit

With statisticians nor commit.

A social science.

2. Now like all of us watching quiz shows I would call out the answers I knew, trying to beat the contestant out there in Never Never Land. "Mrs Gunmidge Parashellon! Reciprocity engine! Dante Gabriel Rossetti!" I would bark. "Ull Amy found more entertainment watching me than she did the show."

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Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, chapter 35.

I am surprised at Bernard Ostry's credulity in the presence of an official report. When he help me write *The Age of Mackenzie King* thirty or more years ago one of his most attractive qualities was a youthful scepticism when analysing official pieces of paper.

H. S. FERNES.
1 Kesteven Close, Sir Harry's Road, Birmingham.

James Gibbs

Sir, — I was interested to read J. B. Bury's observations (Letters, December 28) on the "dossier" entablature and its use by James Gibbs. Putting aside quattrocento examples, Mr Bury suggests antique sources, instancing the coupled columns of S Costanza, Rome. Gibbs would certainly have known this building and it may well have influenced his circular plan for St Martin-in-the-Fields. But entablatures over pairs of columns, as at S Costanza, are not true dossiers. So long as an entablature bridges a gap, however narrow, between two columns it makes grammatical sense. It is when the entablature is presented as a fully articulated model surmounting a single column, as at St Martin's, that it becomes grammatical nonsense and has to be called, for want of a better word, a dossier.

As to Gibbs's experience of this device, I have lately come across a line of enquiry which seems promising. The church of the Holy Trinity at Wolfenbüttel in Lower Saxony, built from the design of Herman Korb in 1705-19, consists of an octagonal space with a vault springing from single Corinthian columns, each crowned by a dossier entablature. There are galleries between the columns and the whole effect must be very like St Martin-in-the-Fields. The church is illustrated in E. Hempel, *Baroque Art and Architecture in Central Europe* (1965, pl 134B), and Hempel seems to suggest that Korb used this arrangement in other churches in the area. Did James Gibbs ever find himself in Lower Saxony? Dr Friedman quotes a curious statement of 1774 to the effect that Gibbs's design for the Radcliffe library at Oxford was "taken from" the famous library at Wolfenbüttel. This is demonstrably untrue, but an eighteenth-century association of Gibbs with Wolfenbüttel may just possibly mean that the locality was not unknown to him.

JOHN SUMMERSON.
1 Eton Villas, London NW3.

'Aristotle on Comedy'

Sir, — In the TLS of October 19, Richard Janko's book, with its provocative title *Aristotle on Comedy*, was reviewed by Oliver Taplin. Although the reviewer gives full credit to Janko's scholarship and pertinacity, he makes it perfectly clear that as far as Janko's thesis — the "aristotelicity" of the full-length discussion on comedy of which the *Tractatus Coislinianus* is

a summary — is concerned, he is not convinced. May I submit my doubts as to the validity of the critical remarks made by Taplin?

1) Taplin does not accept Janko's observation that the *Tractatus* applies to Aristophanes more than to any other comic poet, and says that Aristophanes' comedy "is intensely topical, political and satirical . . . full of physical and verbal slapstick . . . fantastical and topsyturvy . . . All these things are true of Aristophanes and yet not one of them is to be found clearly in the *Tractatus Coislinianus*." I am afraid Taplin's reading has been superficial. The satirical element is discussed in the *Tractatus*, vii and viii (Janko's numbering), and not dismissed out of hand; various ways of verbal slapstick are listed in v, 1-6, physical slapstick in vi, 7; and, what is most important, in vi, 3-4, the "impossible" and the "absurd" are admitted as sources of comic laughter. All this makes a perfectly fitting cap for Aristophanes, apart from the six explicit references to his plays which are found in the *Tractatus*.

2) One of Janko's strongest arguments is the following: if the *Tractatus* were an epitome of a post-Aristotelian discussion of comedy, there ought to have been at least some allusions to, or even quotations from, Menander. There are none. Therefore, the source of the *Tractatus* may very well have been Aristotle. The presupposition of this argument is that everyone in the field after Aristotle knew Menander as the most famous poet of New Comedy, and that Aristotle did not know him. Taplin counters by saying that Aristotle was acquainted with New Comedy and lived on the threshold of its highest expression, the work of Menander. But one ought, I think, to take into account the fact that the *Poetics* is generally agreed to be a very early work (c 350BC), and that (as Taplin himself admits) Menander put on his very first play only the year after Aristotle's death (323BC).

3) In the definition of comedy, laughter is referred to as a *pathema*; Taplin points out that this is nonsense and could never have come from Aristotle's pen. I do not agree. We laugh, because of something that has struck us; laughter and crying are two different ways of surrendering to a situation which is felt as irresistible; it is very much a "passion". Taplin insists that laughter is a physical manifestation of emotions, not an emotion itself. But in *Poetics*, xiv, 53b5, Aristotle himself uses *phrisia*, "hair standing on end" (the manifestation), as equivalent to "fearing" (the emotion).

It may be that the discussion to which Janko's book has given new life will end in disbelief, as far as the "aristotelicity" of the *Tractatus* and its source are concerned. Even so Janko does not deserve to be criticized with arguments which are not nearly so good as they seem to be.

J. M. BREMER.
Amsterdam.

FIFTY YEARS ON

The TLS of January 3, 1935, carried a review by J. L. Garvin, editor of the Observer from 1908 to 1942, of the History of "The Times", Volume 1: "The Thunderer" in the Making, 1785-1841. Volume 5, *Struggles in War and Peace, 1938-1966* by Iverach McDonald, was reviewed in the TLS of December 7 last year by Charles Townshend.

On New Year's Day *The Times* reached its one hundred and fiftieth birthday, and signaled that event by beginning the full-scale publication of its proper "History." When carried up to recent years, as is designed, the work will stand complete in three volumes. . . . It is hard to conceive that there was once an England without *The Times* when other famous newspapers existed. Young Mr. Pitt, aged twenty-five, had been twelve months in office as Prime Minister when an ingenious man aged forty-five, hitherto disappointed but still sanguine, had another notion. Once a thriving coal merchant, the first John Walter had turned underwriter, but was broken by his losses in the American War. Next he purchased the invention of "logographic" printing from founts of types composed of whole words instead of separate let-

ters. To instal himself in this enterprise he bought premises with historic associations in Printing House Square. The general business was no success. He thought of journalism as an adjunct.

On New Year's Day, 1785 — oddly it was a Saturday — he brought out the first number of a small affair grandly called the *Daily Universal Register*. Hence the hundred and fiftieth anniversary we are all celebrating, and hence the "History" under review. Three years later he gave the self-same sheet a new name — *The Times*. Among all the names that have been used or supposed for newspapers, this one remains incomparable. The successive titles that a man often disparaged had in his mind the very root of the matter though his executive faculty was unequal to it. A deferential and expectant person in the age of patronage, he supported Ministers for favours received both as general printer and as journalist. Hence, alas, many tears for mediocrity. Charged with libelling the Prince of Wales and Royal Dukes by paragraphs inserted in Pitt's interest, he suffered fines and long imprisonment. The paper was like to expire under his dispirited methods, but happily he retired well before his death.

محمد المصطفى

The prime and precious thing

Terence Cave

PETER BROOKS
Reading for the Plot: Design and intention in narrative
363pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £17.50.
01918158033

"Plot is why we read *Jaws*, but not Henry James." Reading for the Plot is written against this prejudice, the prejudice that makes reading for the plot "a low form of activity . . . the element that least sets off and defines high art". In this sense, Peter Brooks is performing the same exercise in revaluation of a spurned category of literature as Northrop Frye performed for romance, and exploring further the premises of his own influential earlier study *The Melodramatic Imagination*. The move from the genre of melodrama to a general account of plot is a bold but logical one, in that melodrama as a genre is heavily dependent on plotting (in both senses): the connection emerges most clearly in a brilliant account in the new book of Eugène Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris*, the most spectacularly successful roman-feuilleton of the nineteenth century.

It is easy enough to find a riposte in Henry James himself to the notion that plot is an elementary and subordinate feature of the novel:

There is always, of course, for the story-teller, the irresistible determinant and the incalculable advantage of his interest in the story as such; it is over, obviously, overwhelmingly, the prime and precious thing . . . as to which what makes for it, with whatever headlong energy, may be said to pale before the energy with which it simply makes for itself.

This image (from James's Preface to *The Ambassadors*) of the story writing itself, as it were, is very close to Brooks's insistence on the dynamic aspect of plot, on the energies it displays as it promotes the search for its own end. Brooks likes the metaphors of dynamics — machines, engines, motors — which pervade nineteenth-century narrative and recur in Freud's discussion of the "drives" of the psyche and their eventual "discharge", and he uses them as part of a rhetoric aimed at what, at a higher level of sophistication, amounts to another prejudice. Modern narratology, he argues with some justification, renders plot static by reducing it to a set of formal relations and excluding its motivation, the motor of desire that drives it. Structuralist and post-structuralist poetics is over-suspicious of "life", "experience", even themes (except as formal entities); strenuously resistant above all to interpretation.

Brooks admits that "desire" is a loose term, but he makes of it a plausible point of entry into his topic by positing an analogy (indeed a connection) between the reader's capitulation to the seductive manoeuvres of plot and the desires which drive the characters themselves forward in their search for money, power and sex. Balzac's *La Peau de chagrin* provides a cogent first example, with its interplay between the obsessive desire of the protagonist and the title-metaphor, which acts as a figure of plot, exhausting itself even as it furnishes the object of desire. Later, particularly in the analysis of *Les Mystères de Paris* — it is the prostitute who emerges as the central nineteenth-century figure of the narrative transaction; not simply as commercial goods, equivalent to the currency of mass journalism (the desire for news and novelty), but as the meeting-place of erotic fantasy and a quasi-philanthropic narrative urge to probe the "depths" of society.

Brooks restricts himself in the main to nineteenth and early twentieth-century English and French narratives because they illustrate a period of mass demand for and consumption of plot, together with the demise of the "sacred masterpiece" (the plot guaranteed, in the last analysis, by a divine sanction of its equivalent) — the period, in fact, of the detective story and related forms of plotting. His examples are ones that share the "doubling" of plot: characteristic of detective fiction, where the plot is the retrospective reconstruction of an event — a story — which has already taken place and which is only knowable as a reconstruction. The detective acts like a reader of special competence, selecting only the significant signs and shaping them into narrative. The reading of plot, for Brooks, is a constant anticipation of the moment when, retrospectively, everything will fall into place, and this double movement (prolepsis interwoven with analepsis) is particularly marked in novels which feature fiction-makers like Julien Sorel, narrators like Conrad's Marlow, or constructive listeners like the lawyer in *Le Colonel Chabert*. But he is also concerned with the way in which, progressively, the desire for an ending may be thwarted by the very consciousness that the plot is "constructed" rather than the reflection of an order immanent in life. Even in *Great Expectations*, there is a hesitancy that emerges in the alternative ending; in *L'Éducation sentimentale*, hesitancy becomes endemic as Frédéric moves indecisively through sham plots and missed opportunities to a "retrospective lust" reaching back perversely to an episode that occurred before the plot itself began. In *Heart of Darkness*, still more in *Absalom, Absalom!*, the completing of the narrative sentence is never achieved: the stories that the narrators try to turn into shaped and coherent plots remain always out of reach, unknowable or inexpressible.

In these narratological explorations, Brooks draws explicitly on the Russian formalists (for the *fabula-sujet* opposition) and their French descendants — Todorov, Genette and Barthes. His style of analysis is on the other hand more reminiscent of Frank Kermode, whose *The Sense of an Ending* he refers to with approval: his handling of the mechanisms of form is always subordinate to a view of wider horizons, to the concerns of the intelligent general reader.

Yet his interest in "loosening the grip of formalism" has taken him above all to psychoanalysis and to Freud's reading (and construction) of plots. This move was already clearly visible in *The Melodramatic Imagination* and has been extended in his more recent articles, several of which reappear in modified form in *Reading for the Plot*. Three chapters in particular are designed to provide a theoretical underpinning for the extended analysis of individual novels elsewhere. "Freud's Masterplot" draws on *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in order to inject a powerful thematic charge into the formal conception of the way narratives move towards their end: the constant repetitions and rehearsals of plot presuppose an awareness of temporality and a desire to reach the mortal point at which there will be nothing more to say. "Narrative Transaction and Transference" applies to the relationship between text and reader Freud's concept of transference, the active remaking of the psychic plot in a dialogue between analyst and analysand (from this point in the book, the role of the reader becomes a dominant theme); and "Fictions of the Wolf Man" — already established as one of the most distinguished of recent contributions to narratology — explores the extent to which it is impossible to say whether psychic memories are fictions or the representation of real events.

Brooks is thus interested not in Freudian interpretation of literature in the conventional sense (the attribution of oedipal complexes and the like to author, character or reader) but in the possibility of a Freudian poetics, where interpretative schemas are always seen as a product of the way in which the stories of the psyche are narrated.

But one is still left with the embarrassing question (the question of Freud is somehow always embarrassing): what is the Freudian model worth? Whatever, Brooks might answer, the exchange rate happens to be. In literary criticism, any model which can be made to yield interesting readings that seem to "fit" the text can be justified. *Great Expectations* does in fact turn out to be amenable to an analysis in terms of erased origins; deviant plotting, misread life-stories, and an ultimate "cure" from plot. And the account of *Le Colonel Chabert*, which makes the lawyer into the figure of an analyst unsuccessfully attempting transference, works in that sense, too: it is elegant, economical, and covers most of the salient features of the story.

This criterion self-evidently has only a relative status; however, one could also propose a reading of *Le Colonel Chabert* in terms of reception theory, which would give as motive for Chabert's justification of his identity: the perception that the meaning of his story has been irretrievably lost with the passing of the Napoleonic era; the Restoration creates a new

horizon of response according to which his story is, if not incomprehensible, at least irrelevant. What happens to Chabert might be what would happen to Oedipus, Hamlet, or even Pip, if they heard their stories told (as Brooks tells stories) in the post-Freudian era. In fact, Brooks's argument for a Freudian poetics doesn't appear to depend on an imperialist move which would simply annex a would-be science of the psyche and release it from its claim to tell the truth. He talks repeatedly as if the value of the Freudian model is precisely that it does, in some sense, give access to the way human desires really operate. Psychoanalytic terminology can't (as he uses it) be wholly metaphorical: how otherwise could he speak of the "equivalence established by Freud between blindness and castration" (my italics)? If it were not "established", the transition from the theme of blindness to the theme of castration would be purely gratuitous.

The most powerful argument Brooks advances for "the superimposition of the model of the functioning of the psychic apparatus on the functioning of the text" rests on the assumption that we constitute ourselves through our fictions, that fiction-making and plot-making are as "proper" to man as Aristotle once said laughter was. If the psyche — to coin a phrase of Lacan's — has the structure of a fiction, literary criticism will always have to do with the psyche, and conversely Freud emerges as the first literary analyst to elaborate a poetics of the psyche. And to this may be added the historical point (cogently formulated towards the end of "Fictions of the Wolf Man") that a good deal of Freud's work is grounded in the fictions, metaphors and other imaginative resources available at the beginning of the twentieth century. In which case, of course, it can't itself provide a grounding, since it is part of the system it attempts to master. Its advantage (though a precious one) would only be that, in its doubling of narrative and analysis, story and plot, it provides a poetics appropriate to the history of modern fiction.

Despite these answers, the Freudian question is bound by its nature to keep resurfacing, for example in the use of the term "transference" to point to the therapeutic value of literary works. Attempted transference may arguably be allegorized in fictional form (*Le Colonel Chabert* again), but it seems curious to speak of a once-and-for-all-written narrative as the medium of transference for a reader who has not supplied its materials (the "story") and who is indeed temporally and culturally distanced from those materials. "Dialogue" here — and Brooks speaks of dialogue a good deal in his later chapters, for reasons that are obvious enough — is only a metaphor. How can there be a transference where there is no means by which the reader's language may be rephrased in coherent and manageable form by the text-as-analyst? Unless of course the theory of transference is itself only the exotic outgrowth of a quasi-therapeutic use of language flourishing in the practice we now call "literature".

And finally, the notion of literature as therapy — a familiar enough updating of catharsis — raises a question Brooks doesn't address here: how do we distinguish the therapeutic texts that "blind" our fantasies from the ones that simply repeat them? Is some or all — literature good for us or bad for us? Is Henry James better for us than *Jaws*? If the theory of literary transference is pushed too far, Brooks risks losing all the advantage of his revaluation of the too much reviled plot.

To take issue with him in this way is, however, to acknowledge the seriousness of his method; and also its complexity. He succeeds admirably in establishing a flexible set of coordinates, derived from the different systems of narratology and psychoanalysis, in order to mark out a terrain which is distinctively his own. He also writes to be read: anyone who knows something about narratology and who is willing to pay attention will follow the argument without difficulty.

This, then, is a major book by a major critic. It will appeal both to literary theorists and to readers of the novel, and is likely to be seen as an important point of reference for many years to come. In his insistence that we still need to read for the plot, Brooks offers us a fully articulated escape from a purely formalistic narratology.

Not to be forgotten

W. D. Redfern

LOUIS GUILLOUX
L'Herbe d'oubli
Edited by Françoise Lambert
419pp. Paris: Gallimard. 115 fr.
2070701247

Although Louis Guilloux himself distrusted chronological order, calling it a "nose-heel", Françoise Lambert opts for this solution to the problem of organizing autobiographical material only partially reworked by the author before his death in 1980. Guilloux was unsure, too, whether to call his text "memoirs" (which he felt was too grand, though as a journalist he had interviewed Clemenceau, Anatole France and Jean Longuet), "journal" or "confessions". The editor settles wisely for "récit". The risk was, as Guilloux freely acknowledges, that authorial *laissez-aller* would end in a free-for-all. The real guide-rail in *L'Herbe d'oubli* Guilloux's level tone in the stories he tells of those people, ordinary or important, who have mattered in his life.

Why, indeed, worry about ordering and fiction? While Guilloux frequently castigates himself for so many unfulfilled projects in his life, he knew even more surely that "rien n'est jamais fini". He is engaged in a rescue operation on the past. The title refers both to lugubrious line of poetry by Leconte de Lisle and to a Breton tale of a magic plant, pickled ill-wishers to strew beneath the feet of those they want to curse, so that demons will seize them and dance them to death in an infernal round. For Guilloux, forgetfulness and oblivion (oubli covers both meanings) are as minimal and as pitiable as the *oubliettes* of the ancient régime.

The real-life models for characters in his novels, *La Maison du Peuple*, *Le Sang noir*, *Absent de Paris* or *Les Batailles perdues*, appear in these pages as he knew them in daily life, before he transformed them for his fictional purposes. One of the book's refrains is the two-way traffic between life and fiction, memoirs and novels. At one stage, Guilloux entertains the Pirandellian idea of a character's revolt, in which the tables would be turned as the novelist. The model for the phantasmagoric "Cloporte", a kind of Doppelgänger of the dubious hero Cripure, returned after that novel's publication to haunt Guilloux by prowling the streets of Saint-Brieuc. Guilloux likens the stories he tells to the leaves and branches of a old Breton oak-tree with deep roots.

He is the least censorious of recording angels. As he shuttles between old age and childhood, or between Paris and Saint-Brieuc, he dramatizes the fragments he culls from other people's lives. Although he can sternly condemn unjust behaviour on occasion, he has the ability to find in people very different from himself something worth marvelling at: for example in Augustin Hamon, a socialist publicist and manic orderer of experience, who once pinned a notice up in his privy, to avoid overloading the bucket: "Please don't do numbers 1 and 2 at the same visit."

In old age, though he ruefully notes that the *clit nouvelle* in Saint-Brieuc, shiny and anonymous, is quite unlike the "Clit future" dreamed of by himself as a child and by his militant shoemaker father, Guilloux does not subside into mindless criticism of the contemporary. Gratitude, for his excellent parents, good friends, for small mercies and windfalls, is the dominant mood of this generally low-key *récit*. Like his later short texts (*Cocq perdri*, for instance), it is an *essai de voix*, a private audition, like singing in the bath.

Throughout his youth Guilloux dreamed of sailing away, but also of returning years later to find everyone and everything exactly the same. He did the opposite: he stayed where he was and imagined adventures. In this sedentary nomadism, he is too honest not to admit to egotism: "A travers tout ce qui arrivait et n'arrivait pas, vivait un moi: ce petit dieu fier, vigoureux, invulnérable, caché à tous, dont les autres ne valaient rien, toujours victorieux." He knew how to survive, undecieved but not disillusioned.

Going to extremes

Victor Bromberg

D.G. CHARLTON (Editor)
The French Romantics
Volume 1, 203pp. £25 (paperback, £8.50).
0521244137
Volume 2, 430pp. £25 (paperback, £8.95).
0521259711
Cambridge University Press.

The current revival of interest in French Romanticism is not characterized by much passion for the game of definitions. Articles appearing in the specialized French review *Romantisme* or in the American journal *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* seem on the whole to concur with Paul Valéry's observation that one cannot get drunk on a bottle's label. Devotion to the Symbolists or the Surrealists no longer calls for a dismissive attitude towards the writers of the so-called Romantic generations. The days are gone when the ideological hostility of Sellière, Maurras and Lasserre in France, T. E. Hulme in England, and Irving Babbitt in the United States, successfully spread the notion that the Romantic movement and sensibility had been both foolish and noxious.

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For it could be argued that Stendhal and Balzac (not to mention Flaubert — but he does not belong to the "heyday") are supremely Romantic. Baudelaire's praise of Balzac is worth recalling: "Oh, Honoré de Balzac, you the most heroic, the strangest, the most romantic and the most poetic among all the creatures that you have begotten." The desire to aggrandize triviality, to read demonic forces into daily life; the notion of self-consuming energy and of genius as self-destructive; the urge to write a modern summa in affirmation of a unity hidden behind the heterogeneity of experience — all these are central features in the work of Balzac, and they are surely Romantic in the deeper sense of the word. As for Stendhal's Romanticism, it is not to be found in the polemical statements of *Racine et Shakespeare*, but in the novelist's glorification of will, of the privileged moment, of the exceptional being, and in the ironically fictionalized exaltation of a self-conscious sensibility that camouflages its fears and vulnerability the better to defend an inner freedom.

The double example of Stendhal and Balzac suggests that it is hard to avoid conceptualizations. We have known for some time now that Romanticism means more than a rebellion against the theatrical *unlites*, a love of nature, or the much belaboured notion of *couleur locale*. What is involved is a major shift in the Western sensibility, the symptoms of which are the taste for a "frisson nouveau" (Hugo applied the expression to Baudelaire), an oniric perception of reality, and an increasingly vatic view of genius associated with pathology and alienation. The seer, the "poète maudit", the prophetic underground voice, all proclaim, in one form or another, the priority of the irrational; a priority already suggested by the favourite images of the gothic novel: towers, crypts, underground passageways, dark vaults, secret dungeons — all of them images of a dizzying verticillity.

What complicates such a metaphorical view of Romanticism is that the images and symbols of vertically constantly intersect and clash with horizontal images of process, of progress, of linear dynamics, stressing the energies of history, and the precedence of becoming over being. History is seen as vital and tragic; it is not only the reservoir of a collective memory, the provider of a collective identity, but a common destiny, a forward movement, a *fatum*. And historiography, cross-fertilizing with fiction and myth, tends to become increasingly

There is little doubt that the violence of history, specifically the violence of the French Revolution with its remembered yet repressed psycho-historical trauma of regicide/parricide, affects much that is thought, felt, hoped and feared during the Romantic period. A latent sense of history as tragedy is kept alive and even heightened by the events of 1815, 1830 and 1848. The pivotal years may be 1830-2, years of apparent transition during which the French consciousness is compelled to look both forward and backward — the revelatory period evoked by Hugo in *Les Misérables*.

Nor is it surprising that a latent revolutionary consciousness finds its aesthetic correlative in a breakdown of codes and models. The anti-hero comes into his own in a literary context that tends to efface the barriers between genres. Irony lurks behind the façade of pathos and sentimentality. The parodic and ironic thrusts of much Romantic literature — especially of prose fiction — make it fertile ground for deconstructive readings. Rhetoric is clearly perceived in its relation to the retrieval, transformation, and re-creation of myths. The massive use of metaphor in the service of myth parallels the appropriation of such figures as Job, Prometheus, Satan and even Napoleon to serve new themes. In the background looms the modern myth of *le peuple* — but it is an ambivalent myth, since this *peuple*, as Michelet put it, is still a speechless child, a "pauvre créature muette", capable moreover of violence and destruction.

Messianic hopes were often placed on this advent of *le peuple*, and they clearly extend beyond politics. The notion of a "fall" — manifested through *ennui* (not ordinary boredom, but a metaphysical malaise) as well as through attitudes toward language (Babel is a recurrent image) — led to dreams of spiritual regeneration, to visions of private and collective salvation. Even Satan was to be saved! Frank Bowman puts it succinctly: it was "loss of faith that generated literature". The sense of void indeed seemed to become a sense of plenitude, as negativity was turned into an absolute. The hope of regeneration presides over the entire period, whether in the social utopias of a Fourier or a Saint-Simon, the new concept of an epic as the story of humanity's spiritual adventure on its march towards an ideal future, or in the growing notion of Literature as an institution and even a religion. Such aspirations may account for the tendency towards the refusal to conceptualize and problematize the notion of Romanticism.

The traditional areas are well covered in chapters of *The French Romantics* devoted to poetry and theatre. W.D. Howarth's survey of Romantic drama from *Hernani* (1830) to *Les Burgraves* (1843) inevitably focuses on Hugo, on his revolution in theatrical diction and challenge to the established order; but it does not neglect Vigny, Musset and Dumas. Howarth deals persuasively with drama as a "powerful medium for the dissemination of the Romantic ideology", especially in his observations on the outlaws, the bastards, as figures of otherness, and the social parasite as figures of otherness. The more interesting pages are probably those that pay tribute once again to the originality of Victor Hugo (his almost operatic use of lyric themes in dramatic structures), as well as to Musset's highly poetic and ironic use of the prose medium.

As for Romantic poetry, it is given sober, factual treatment in a largely descriptive essay by J. C. Ireson. A great deal of information is compressed into less than fifty pages: Ireson does not aim at conceptualized analyses. But in dealing primarily with five poets (Lamartine, Musset, Gautier, Vigny and Hugo) he provides origins and derivations; he discusses the resurgence of the lyric, the ode and the epic in the 1820s; he pays tribute to the *musée pedestre* of Sainte-Beuve — and generally succeeds in evoking the "enlargement of poetry" which enabled poets to incorporate historical, philosophical and religious subjects. Ireson is especially perceptive in dealing with Musset's "irreverent wit" and with the "sorcellerie évocatoire" so evident already in the work of Gautier before Baudelaire gave it a conscious formulation.

Equally gratifying is the chapter on music, in part because the subject is so rarely treated in discussions of the Romantics, but largely because Macdonald relates his very precise documentation to the history of taste and the history of ideas. Supported by interesting statistics, these pages — written with humour, and even with a bite — stress the importance of opera, the taste for the grandiose, the belief that music is the expression of the ineffable, the cosmopolitan nature of the Parisian musical scene, the novelty of certain instruments, the role of music journals, the function of the salons. (But why is the salon of Princess Belgiojoso not mentioned?) Rossini, Meyerbeer, Halévy, Auber get their due. Liszt and Chopin are of course central figures. Rightly, Macdonald insists on the uniqueness of Berlioz. But he does not fail to mention other curious musical personalities, such as the Saint-Simonian composer Félicien David and the rather strange Jewish piano virtuoso and composer Alkan. The chapter is a pleasure to read.

One of the positive results of Charlton's method of having a variety of perspectives converge on aspects of French Romanticism is that the so-called marginal often turns out to be quite central. This appears very clearly in Douglas Johnson's chapter on the historians: Thierry, Guizot, Mignet, Louis Blanc, Quinet — and the most "romantic" of them all, the visionary and lyrical Michelet. This clear and comprehensive presentation shows how and why these historians tended to give up expository models, and aimed at writing a new type of history which would show the thrust of larger forces. Their preference went to narrative, their themes tended to highlight transformation, their sympathies were for the conquered and forgotten, their underlying assumption was that historiography had a sense-making, didactic purpose. Johnson is particularly suggestive in evoking the "romantic resurrectionist approach". The pages on the poetic vision of Michelet are excellent, as are the observations on the function of anathema, and of the heroic and apocalyptic treatment of the French Revolution. This chapter might well serve as a starting-point for further discussions about the progressive malaise and alienation of intellectuals as they experience an increasing commitment to popular forces.

Roger Fayolle's chapter on criticism and theory is perhaps the one that holds fewest surprises. This was probably not an easy piece to write, as it meant going over well-trodden ground. We are reminded once more of the polemics of the time, and of the fact that Romanticism in France did not, at least at the outset, go with liberal convictions in politics. But Fayolle brings up a number of ideas that are very much worth considering at greater length: the newness of the concept "la littérature", the growing role of the critics, the collaboration and rift between creators and critics, the literary importance of art criticism,

Victor Bromberg

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0521244137
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0521259711
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Going to extremes

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illustrated by the examples of Gautier and Baudelaire.

The chapter on the visual arts was perhaps the most difficult to write. Defining Romanticism in painting is a tricky business, and the parallels are not clear. It is well known, for instance, that Delacroix did not like the Romantic writers; he expressed himself most unflatteringly on the subject of Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Hugo and Balzac. He admired Voltaire. Baudelaire like to recall how Delacroix, at the time of the great Romantic battles, claimed to love above all Racine, La Fontaine and Boileau. The real point is that despite the Romantics' expressed belief in the solidarity of the arts, wide differences existed between the temperaments of individual artists

Hammer and anvil

Patrick McCarthy

PAUL CLAUDEL and JACQUES RIVIÈRE
Correspondance 1907-1924
399pp. Paris: Gallimard. 150 fr.
207070103

The "Cahiers Paul Claudel" have now published the correspondence between Claudel and Jacques Rivière, 134 letters exchanged between 1907 and Rivière's early death in 1925. This edition will replace the volume which was published by Isabelle Rivière after her husband's death (Jacques Rivière et Paul Claudel: Correspondance 1907-1914, Plon, 1926). The new edition, prepared by Auguste Anglès and Pierre de Gaulmyn, contains a commentary, detailed notes and an index. It is superbly prepared and one's only regret is that the letters written by Rivière after 1913 have not survived. They seem to have been destroyed by the Tokyo earthquake which devastated the French embassy and Claudel's archives.

Isabelle Rivière's decision to stop in 1914, while entirely comprehensible, was slightly misleading because it presented Rivière's decision to receive communion at Christmas 1913 as the climax of his conversion – or more correctly return – to Catholicism. Claudel, who had laboured mightily for that conversion, knew that only later did Rivière deepen his religious experience, as his wartime *Carnets* reveal. After his return from captivity he turned away from Catholicism and his friendship with Claudel grew more distant. This edition of the *Correspondance* offers insights into their arguments about the Surrealists and about Proust.

The introduction is a masterly piece of writing by the late Auguste Anglès, the historian of the pre-1914 *Nouvelle Revue Française*. Here he offers brilliant, complex portraits of Rivière and Claudel, whom he views with sympathy and a dash of irony. Anglès demolishes the simplistic notion that Claudel was a blind zealot and Rivière a butterfly who flitted between Gide and Claudel before settling on Proust. Claudel's faith was all the more urgent because he was rent by contradictions. Lurking behind the pages of these letters are two great dramas: the love affair which provided the raw material for *Parade de Midy* and the madness of his sister, Camille Claudel, who is now the object of much attention in France and whose sculpture may be seen at the Musée Rodin, was committed to a hospital in 1913. To her brother she offered a terrible example of the perils to which the artist is exposed and in particular she may have confirmed him in his quest for limits and boundaries.

Claudel's moods were violent and changing and his trenchant opinions should be considered as personal outbursts rather than as dogma. He had a sense of humour which he displayed by imposing on his young admirers the silliest, most paradoxical aspects of Catholicism, while some of his literary judgments are frankly comical. It is delightful to read that Flaubert "wrote badly", that the Russian ballet was "disappointingly banal", and that Nietzsche "cannot feel belonging to that dreadful race, the Germans".

Rivière gladly exposed his soul to the hammer blows of Claudel's letters but he was not without defences. Analysing his "malgré-à-lui" Anglès notes that Rivière reacted

and between the means of expression – difference that make it difficult to speak of literature, music and painting in the same terms. William Vaughan is well aware of these difficulties, and he brings out some telling paradoxes as he discusses pictorial values, innovations and achievements. His analysis of Géricault's "Le Radeau de la Méduse" is most stimulating in that it makes patent the subversiveness of a work which undermines the notion of historical painting. There are also fine observations on the impact of lithography and wood engraving, and sound judgments on Corot, David, Daumier, Gavarni, and on the extraordinary graphic work of Victor Hugo.

It is perhaps Max Milner's essay, "Romantics on the fringe", which best brings out some

of the essential features of French Romanticism. In discussing the more idiosyncratic, marginal personalities, and in describing some of the more radical postures and experiments, Milner perceptively focuses on what in the turbulence of Romanticism prepares and announces Modernism. He provides a parade of colourful figures, some of whom haunted *Le Petit Cénacle*, gathering in the studio of the sculptor Jean Duseigneur or in Petrus Borel's weird lodging at the top of the rue Rochechouart. Some of the names are now almost forgotten: Aloysius Bertrand, Célestin Nanteuil, Philotée O'Neddy, Alphonse Esquiros. The influence of Sade was all-pervasive. The group of the impasse du Doyenné is perhaps better remembered, largely because

of the lasting prestige of Gérard de Nerval. All these groups (and there are overlaps) share certain features. They played out and lived out Romanticism to the hilt, whether in their concept of the artist as a being apart and in conflict with bourgeois society, or toying with the intolerable, the need to subvert the relation between art and reality, or the tendency to push literary expression to its limits. Above all, they seemed to subscribe to Nerval's statement: "Le rêve est une seconde vie." Milner writes some inspired pages on Nerval. And it is only fitting that he quotes the opening sentence of *Aurélia* at the end of his essay. In the multiple meanings of this enigmatic sentence may well be found the most important message of Romanticism.

both a priest and a doctor. In 1919 Claudel intervened in order to help prevent Gide from becoming the editor of the *NRF* and the post went to the delighted Rivière, whom Gide never quite forgave.

By now Rivière was changing again and Anglès is right to state that "if anyone took Rivière from Claudel, it was not Gide but Proust". In 1922 Rivière could declare to Claudel in a letter which has escaped destruction that he was less and less capable of seeing things from the moral point of view; Proust had taught him that morality was an artificial construction which impeded a full analysis of the human character. Although Claudel's dislike of Proust did not lead him to dismiss *A la Recherche du temps perdu*, he criticized the lack of will-power in Proust's characters and the "stagnant" quality of his novel. Implicitly he must have been comparing *A la Recherche* with *Le Souffleur de satin*, where man is dynamic because harassed by divine grace. Rivière's

Beyond the merely literary

John Sturrock

TZVETAN TODOROV
Critique de la critique: Un roman d'apprentissage
203pp. Paris: Seuil. 75fr.
2020085100
ROLAND BARTHES
Le Bruissement de la langue
147pp. Paris: Seuil. 99fr.
2020069318

The mysterious subtitle of Tzvetan Todorov's collection of meta-critical essays turns out to be a crucial *mot d'emploi*: his book is to be read as a *Bildungsroman* of sorts, as the story of how he has gradually come to his critical senses. The seven chapters concerned with the ideas of other critics have perhaps been published before, seriatim, the book nowhere says; but they have now been compellingly arranged into a whole with the momentum of a narrative – they urge us on to Todorov's final chapter in which he tells, candidly and most interestingly, of his renunciation of the Formalist criticism which has made his name over the twenty-odd years since he came to France from Bulgaria, and of his preference now for a "dialogical" criticism in which the critic engages with texts and authors on transcendent questions of values.

The early theme of the essays, repeatedly brought out, is that of "literariness", that phantom specificity of literature sought so ingeniously and in vain by the Russian Formalists and others. The idea that literature has properties and a language all its own Todorov follows back beyond the Formalists by way of Mallarmé to Kant and the German Romantics, as well as forwards into such theorists as Döblin, Brecht, Sartre, Blanchot, Barthes, Northrop Frye and Bakhtin. His list in each case is to see how far they accepted this Romantic model of the literary as something autonomous and autotelic, and how far they refused it. This is the same test as he is, implicitly at this point, undergoing himself. The upshot of the essays, as well as their secret premise, is that there can and must be no such half-hearted divorce between the literary and the non-literary, the

aesthetic and the utilitarian.

These studies in literary theory are thus more than merely descriptive or analytical, though they do describe and analyse in Todorov's very best manner. But as the volume proceeds he takes more and more obvious charge of it. He finds fault with certain of his subjects for their intellectual confusion or their irresponsibility. He is enjoyably hard on Blanchot, casting him first, as many of us would be inclined to do, as a precious obscurantist, and then as a baneful nihilist, who would like to see literature freed from all questions of ethics.

With such solipsists as this out of the way, Todorov moves on to robust critics for whom literature has always been, essentially, a moral and social study. He opens a first window on the larger world in an exchange of letters with the fearlessly empirical Ian Watt, and then enters on a serious dialogue about the nature of literature with Paul Bénichou, a powerful and less than fashionable critic for whom literary form is very much secondary to the ideological purposes of authors and the relation of these to the societies they lived in.

By now Todorov is in full view, the partner and the equal of the critic he is interrogating, and in his last chapter he delivers his account of how he came to see this kind of criticism as the most responsible and as a mature replacement for the narrower, technical sort he was steeped in. Dialogical criticism for Todorov is a compromise between the vacuous dogmatism of the critics he had met with in Marxist Bulgaria and the pusillanimous structuralism which prefers the safety of formal description to the risk of evaluation. His adoption of it, or arrival at it, will surely cause a stir in France, and be over-interpreted as a sign of health returning to the critical profession there. In Britain, we can be flattered that Todorov's change of heart was at least partly brought on by chance remarks made to him by such men of the world as Arthur Koestler and Sir Isaiah Berlin, while asking whether he isn't making too much of it. Todorov's credo is one of an impeccable tolerance and humanism, so much so that it is worrying that he should have felt called on to proclaim it as sectarianism in literary Paris runs

enthusiasms for Proust and his guarded interest in Dada, reflected in his 1920 essay *Reconnaissance à Dada*, separated him from Claudel.

But Claudel had enough perspicacity to see that Rivière was not really abandoning moral values, as his novel *Aimée* (1922) shows. Indeed he describes Proust's quest for lucidity as a form of abnegation and asceticism, which is very reminiscent of the pre-1914 *NRF*. Rivière's last years are difficult to piece together but he too criticized what he felt to be Proust's passivity and he may have been moving towards new enthusiasms and a new synthesis. After publishing *Aimée* he wondered whether he might not possess a novelist's vocation and wrote a second novel, *Florence*. Nor can one be certain that he had rejected his old faith: his wife's introduction to the Plon edition of the correspondence should not be taken as lightly as it sometimes is. It remains true, however, that the most interesting pages of these letters were written before 1914.

deeper than one feared if his assumption of a fresh and benign commitment needs to be made explicitly, rather than left for his readers to infer and to appraise for themselves.

There are some excellent pages on Barthes in *Critique de la critique*, in which Todorov protests against Barthes's jubilant relativism as a critic while emphasizing his great liking for the man. He believes, surely rightly, that towards the end of his life Barthes grew less elusive and more concerned morally, ready to put his trust in a simple sociability as an absolute standard of human or literary worth. That development in Barthes can be caught in *Le Bruissement de la langue*, a fourth collection of occasional writings (two more will be published in the month to come) from the periodicals and reviews he contributed to so generously. The first piece, "De la science à la littérature", appeared in the *TLS* in 1967, the last, a studiously autobiographical "Délibération", in *Le Quotidien* in 1977 (though the arrangement of the pieces is thematic, not chronological). The strength and charm of the earlier, less personal items here provide Barthes with an ample licence for his eventual incorporation of himself into his subject-matter. The transition from critic to writer is made subtly, decorously and with a watchful irony; Barthes will be a hard example for Tzvetan Todorov to live up to.

Jean-Paul Sartre's *War Diaries: Notebooks from a phoney war 1939-40* have recently been published in an accurate and readable English translation by Quintin Hoare (366pp. Verso. £14.95. 0 86091 087 3). Sartre was assigned to the meteorological section of an Artillery HQ just behind the front in the autumn of 1939, and his military duties for the next nine months or so consisted in "sending up balloons and then watching them through a pair of field glasses". This left him with a great deal of spare time, and he filled one notebook after another with a brilliant series of reflections on *inter alia* ethics, war, peace, seduction, time, poetry, pride and frivolity. The original French edition was reviewed in the *TLS* by Annette Leys (May 11, 1984, pp 511-12).

I, you and the desert

Michael Hofmann

CHRISTOPH GEISER
Wüstenfahrt
313pp. Zürich: Nagel und Kimche. Sw fr 32.
3312 00104 8
FRANZ BÖNI
Die Alpen
117pp. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp. DM28.
3518 04509 1
Alle Züge fahren nach Salem
99pp. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp. DM19.80.
3 518 04695 0

It is strange praise, but Christoph Geiser's *Wüstenfahrt* (*Desert Journey*) doesn't read like his fourth book. It has all the immediacy, recklessness and exhaustiveness one expects from a first novel. It comes over as autobiography, as a transcription of true events, set down without craft or distance. Thus, the characters are not "characters" but real people. They don't even have names. There is only the "I" and "you" of lyric or elegy – somewhat tiring, this, over a whole novel. Geiser's remark, on the first page, that he is writing a personal letter is not followed up, and not to be taken seriously. His addressee is absent, as the addressee of lyric or elegy is absent, and without that absence there would have been no book. *Wüstenfahrt* is a critical account of a love-affair, rough-edged and disorganized, but beautifully written, vulnerable and alive.

The two weaknesses of the book are its two extremities. It begins at the end, and ends in the middle. Both are mishandled – especially the beginning, one more description of the writer sitting down to write, surrounded by the quaintly Chanderlesque tools of the trade. But Geiser is so full of his subject that almost anything will set him going, and, on the second page, it is some enlarged photographs on his wall that do so. The photographs are of the Arizona desert, they were taken by his lover and companion, both of them are hooked on deserts, it was their third or fourth visit to one. All this emerges later. For the moment, we are still in Twenty Nine Palms, a settlement consisting of a motel-loop, a bar and a diner; a place infested by drunk and violent Marines, served by a huge Belgian barmaid ("What can you do in Twenty Nine Palms? She had answered you in her own language: Boire de l'alcool et faire l'amour. Avec quoi donc?").

The cure as symptom

Michael Butler

ADOLF MUSCHG
Das Licht und der Schlüssel: Erziehungsroman eines Vampirs
519pp. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp. DM38.
3518 04702 7
URS WIDMER
Die gestohlene Schöpfung: Ein Märchen
236pp. Zürich: Diogenes. Sw fr 24.80.
3257 1661 1
HUGO LOETSCHER
Noah: Roman einer Konjunktur
143pp. Zürich: Diogenes. Sw fr 9.80.
3 257 21206 2
Das Hugo Loetscher Lesebuch
300pp. Zürich: Diogenes. Sw fr 12.80.
3257 21207 0

Since the mid-1960s, German-Swiss literature has undergone an extraordinary renaissance. Whereas before that date it was synonymous – outside Switzerland at least – with the names of Max Frisch and Friedrich Dürrenmatt, today there is a rich variety of literary talent, especially in the field of narrative fiction.

Adolf Muschg is one of the best-known writers to emerge in this period, and his new novel, *Das Licht und der Schlüssel*, is formally his most ambitious to date. The first-person narrator, Constantin Samstag – closely related, not merely by name, to several earlier protagonists in Muschg's narrative world – has so lost touch with reality that he feels himself to be a living corpse, a vampire. Through the obsessive creation of stories he appears to rescue from imminent collapse Moos, a moribund invalid who shares the same Amsterdam villa, and at the same time to re-establish for himself

and visited by two Swiss homosexuals, the timid writer and his more self-confident friend. It is the first of many such scenes: tremulous, yet oddly dispassionate. Even when the two men are alone together, their separate pronouns – the obsessively-watched "Du", the feebly enclitic "ich" – ensure that the scene somehow remains public, and becomes a parable of authority and obedience, suffering and devotion: who drives, who takes the pictures, who manages small-talk in English, who is up on ecological behaviour. The answer, invariably, is "Du".

Very slowly, Geiser releases more information about the history and the nature of the relationship. His lover is rather older than he is, married, with children, a successful business lawyer living outside Bern. They first met ten years ago, when Geiser (or the "I" of the book) had refused to do military service, and the lawyer, hailed in excitable italics as "mein Flursprecher" (my advocate), secures better conditions of imprisonment for him. For most of the book, though, the reader is held in a detailed and fascinating suspense, cut off from history and society, alone with the "I" and the "you". Their relationship is carried on in secrecy, mainly abroad, on holiday, in North Africa, in Greece, in the North American desert, in those dull, inhospitable biotopes (the word is used repeatedly) that to them are both hospitable

and interesting. These arid, marginal landscapes that they gravitate towards – at once places of possibility and wastelands, great ghettoized expanses in which they see themselves reflected – are always preferable to the other locations in the book: the Disneyish gayness of Los Angeles and the *louche* precincts of Bern (brilliantly described as a city of diplomats, surrounded by treacherous, contented and malevolent villages); the solitude of some North American campus; or the agonizing evenings with the family of his lover, or at his own home, where everything only serves – like the photographs – to remind him of the man. The desert is their only home, and when Geiser has had enough of it, and of his own convenient, available status, it marks the end of their relationship, their *Wüstenfahrt*.

The great achievement of the novel is that, without any apparent overall design, merely using the realities of life as he finds it, Geiser has created something poetically compelling, an informal system as sharp and binding as a trap. Every location is an element in that system: not only the deserts, but the bars and gay bars, the Baptist wastes of Ohio, the Magic Mountain outside LA and the Olberg in Bern where the "night-boys" and "wildcats" wait, the sexual panic and failure of the sauna, the dingy resident writer's room in Ohio, and his own room in Bern, where the overgrown ac-



Duane Michaels's "Portrait of Eva Rubinstein Dreaming of her Children", from the exhibition Duane Michaels: Photographs/Sequences/Texts 1958-1984 at the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford until February 3. The picture is reproduced from the exhibition catalogue (160pp. £4.50 plus £1.90 post and packing. 0 901836 46 4).

malaise of contemporary society, or whether it is merely the most damaging symptom of it, and thus the artist a vampirical parasite on the rotten body politic. The answer (the "key" of the title) remains stubbornly hidden, the search paradoxically confined to where the light happens to fall – an old music-hall joke which has inspired Muschg to turn the quarrel with himself, if not exactly into poetry, then into a prose labyrinth of fascinating verbal ingenuity.

At first glance Urs Widmer's *Die gestohlene Schöpfung* possesses a scurrilous humour in stark contrast to Muschg's seriousness. But his radically different method obscures a similar interest in setting a harshly perceived reality against a longing for utopia, that is, a society characterized by open personal relationships and a stimulating awareness of the diverse nature of existence. Both authors see "normality" critically as an unreflected one-dimensionality which reduces human beings to the level of cliché.

Die gestohlene Schöpfung is subtitled "a fairy tale", and it charts the eccentric odyssey of a middle-aged stockbroker, professionally and emotionally bankrupt, who becomes entangled in a series of improbable adventures in Frankfurt, Marseilles and South America. The narrative pattern is that of the trivial, action-packed detective story in which the sophisticated world of computers and medical research clashes with the ancient, but corrupt myths of the primitive Indians of Brazil. However, the flat realism of Widmer's style soon reveals itself to be an illusion: As the narrator's credibility disintegrates, the reader is invited to speculate on the nature of creation, both literary and mythical.

Widmer's point seems to be that the

imagination must constantly re-create its own myths in order to oppose the insidious standardization of experience demanded and promoted by a civilization locked into an ideology of inhuman hyper-efficiency.

After so much strenuous narrative game-playing, it is a relief to turn to the lucid prose of Hugo Loetscher. The reissue of his third novel *Noah* (1967, published in English translation by Peter Owen in 1970) is timely. For the story has lost surprisingly little of its satirical edge in the intervening years. Loetscher's witty attack on the Affluent Society of the 1960s is even more pertinent now that the glittering prizes have tarnished. In this neatly worked allegory, Noah's ark-building is both the source of an economic boom and the ultimate cause of communal and familial bitterness. The cautionary tale of his gradual transformation from powerful benefactor to despised scapegoat is achieved with laconic mastery.

Das Hugo Loetscher Lesebuch is a welcome addition to the Diogenes series which aims to illustrate the range of an established author's work. This volume covers a period of twenty years, with the accent on the last five. It counterbalances well-chosen extracts from Loetscher's narrative fiction with a selection of his perceptive political commentaries, socio-literary essays and acute portraits of such leading Swiss artists as Varlin, Giacometti and the Russian-born émigré Adrian Tourlet, as well as of Friedrich Dürrenmatt and the country's leading (and most shamefully persecuted) Marxist, Konrad Farnet. This well-designed anthology conveys an accurate and succinct portrait of a committed intellectual whose sense of moral outrage at injustice and cruelty is never allowed to degenerate into hollow moralizing.

Linked by a single tail

Alan Bell

GILBERT ADAIR
Alice Through the Needle's Eye
Illustrated by Jenny Thorne
186pp. Macmillan. £6.95.
0333 373618
LEWIS CARROLL
Alice's Adventures in Wonderland
Illustrated by Justin Todd
158pp. Gollancz. £6.95.
0575 032634

Parodies of or sequels to Alice's two adventures have been attempted often enough before, sometimes at a weekly competition level of current political allegory but rarely at the length or with the success of Gilbert Adair's highly entertaining and convincing new volume. He appears to have been called to his task by the Muse, who was worried by the lack of an Alice sequel:

"Might someone not present himself
As Lewis Carroll's heir?
But oh! who would this role assume,
If only as a dare?"
The echo came: "Adair!"

The assumption of this mantle might have seemed presumptuous if the verses had appeared at the beginning of the volume; at its end, when we have seen that Mr Adair is fully adept in style, tone and technique, we can applaud the Muse's good taste in making her choice.

There might have been a temptation to present Alice sentimentally, but here she is a robust creation, very composed in manner, a quietly rational, well-brought-up, handkerchief-in-the-sleeve little girl, with an extensive vocabulary and a logical mind at her disposal – and a good memory, unlike her friend the grampus: "I sometimes forget I am absent-minded", he remarks, "and remember everything." Such a paragon as Alice, who in lesser hands could easily have become a prig, here shows herself sympathetic, witty and convincing, and a highly effective continuation from her earlier incarnation.

Nor is the world she briefly occupies when her constant efforts to thread a needle prove unavailing much different from what was found through the looking-glass and elsewhere. Actual cats and dogs are raised, crows' nests have crows' eggs inside them, otters give their ottergraphs, speculations on Infinity show Gladstone and Disraeli somewhat warily in amity at the end of their parallel lines, and the maze is attended by logical and literal paradoxes of much ingenuity. "I only meant . . .", Alice starts saying to the amiably disposed grampus, only to be shouted down with a

Don't mean! Think, speak, mention, assert, deliberate, declare – even opine, if you will – but never, never mean! Why, the world would be in a fine stew if just everybody felt free to mean, when and where they pleased!

With mere meaning at a discount and the rationale of deliberation thus extended. We can feel at intellectual liberty in a world where Siamese cats are linked by a single tail, and in which it is not merely plausible but somehow inevitable that *parler* and *manifir* provide the correct etymology of Parliament.

The twin cats and the grampus have distinctive personalities, the former chattering archly among itself (or themselves) like a pair of antique-dealers, the latter more consequential, but despite his *gravitas* so often beside himself with anxiety on railway journeys that he makes a practice of buying two tickets.

Yet these and other creatures would have been the poorer without a sympathetic illustrator, and the effect of *Through the Needle's Eye* is much improved by twenty-two excellent illustrations by Jenny Thorne. They are very much in the Tenniel tradition but have a steel-engraver's clarity of line and regularity of batching that distinguish them from Tenniel's originals as interpreted for printing by the Dalziel brothers. The Thorne drawings would, however, have been no more than curiosities – like the sharply engraved diagrams from Victorian dry-goods catalogues – now so much in vogue for graphic design source-books – were it not for their intimate connection with the text. As is well known, Lewis Carroll was an exigent patron of Tenniel's, specifying his pictorial requirements almost as if dictating to

a stenographer. Gilbert Adair and Jenny Thorne appear to have worked as closely, and the verbal (and typographical) wit of the text has been carried into the illustrations.

The same affinity cannot be discerned in the brightly coloured fantasies Justin Todd has prepared for the new Gollancz edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Childhood photographs of Alice Liddell are used as the basis of a new round-faced, dark-haired Alice, whose world at the bottom of the rabbit burrow is reinterpreted with "a dazzling array of pictures". Some traditional features have had to be dropped (one dreading the possibility of the hatter's price-tag reading "In this style, 53p", which has prudently been avoided), but most details remain. Those deeply attached to the Tenniel edition will probably not like this latest set, though they are certainly very striking as illustrations; they seem, however, to lack that special affinity with the text that makes the traditional volume so enduring a pleasure.

Making good

Gillian Avery

ANGELA BULL
Noel Streetfield
254pp. Collins. £8.95.
000 1950444

Noel Streetfield is one of the very few celebrities of success in the history of English children's books. Children love imagining success, not just the mild sort that timid writers are prepared to allow – a rosette for the pony, a scholarship, a part in the play – but heady triumphs with raving audiences and world renown. For adults to write convincingly in this style takes not only courage but a vein of child-like naivety, and the reasons why Noel Streetfield found such satisfaction in the theme lie in her early life, as Angela Bull's biography shows. All through childhood and youth she had been resentfully conscious of the gap between her aspirations and her achievements, and when at last (having tried and failed with acting) she found, in her thirties, that writing was the medium in which she could best express herself, she also discovered that you can (or rather could in the 1930s and 40s) introduce into children's books copious quantities of self-indulgent fantasy. She not only got away with it but she achieved commercial success.

The literary prestige that she once enjoyed, which was due to her lively child-characters and the care she took with background details of their chosen careers, has diminished, and her books are now regarded as the sort of light reading that it is hoped will lure children on to better things. Her books seem simplistic, facile, sometimes mechanical, and slapdash to the point of plain bad writing. But where adult attitudes have changed, the children have remained constant. There is a period in the lives of many of them when they find her books, not just an easy read as with Blyton, but satisfying, something to be cherished and returned to again and again.

She was born in 1895; the second daughter of a Sussex vicar; and her very birthday, Christmas Eve, was a grievance in a childhood full of disappointments and grievances. To compensate for a day she thought inadequately celebrated she filled her stories with birthdays properly kept. The large Streetfield family had little money for luxuries, so the child Noel had to endure passed-down clothes chosen by a mother with little dress sense. That grievance bit particularly deep and she worries away obsessively at the theme in all her stories. Let-down coats with "worn patches where the material had a whitish look", shabby velvets ("velvets have to be good"), dresses that are too small, dresses that are just wrong; most of her characters, who tend to be children from struggling middle-class families, have to put up with them at some point or another.

After the First World War, during which she worked making munitions, she persuaded her father to let her study for the stage. Her acting career lasted for ten years and cannot be said to have been a success. Nor did she particularly enjoy it, and it did not provide her with the luxuries which she felt were her due.

Devices and desires

Eric Korn

JONATHAN MILLER and DAVID PELHAM
The Facts of Life: A three-dimensional study
Cape. £8.95.
0224 022423
RAY MARSHALL and JOHN BRADLEY
Watch It Work! The Car
Viking/Kestrel. £6.95.
0726 59601
ALICE and MARTIN PROVENSEN
Leonardo da Vinci: The artist inventor scientist in three dimensional movable pictures
Hutchinson. £6.95.
009 1591104

The use of overlays, flaps, transparencies and other devices of paper engineering in the study of anatomy has a long and respectable history. In Descartes's *De Homine Figuris* (1662) there were paper overlays for valves and glands; be-

fore him there was Remmelin and after him the delightful *Obstetric Tables* of George Spratt (1837) with its modishly gowned ladies whose bellies pull aside to display a series of foetal membranes surrounding the babe unborn, or even, magically, twins.

Some of the charm of that book lives on in the Miller-Pelham *Facts of Life*. One page-opening shows, under a sheet of celluloid that serves for an amniotic sac, the misty outlines of the forty-day foetus, furled like a fern-shoot, with its great block-head like an Aztec crystal skull, below which the body melts into a blurred and generalized shape, as likely to grow into a pig as a baby. There are two other foetal scenes, the twenty-four-week embryo with its placenta and membranes, and a full-term infant at the very moment of birth, its downy crown emerging through the pelvic arch. This last plate is close to the limits of paper technology: the body, formed of two abutting paper laminae, swells like a wind-filled tent if you open the book too far.

The model that portrays the instant of fertilization provides another small pleasurable shock to the reader, if reader is the word. Open the book, and there is a vast ice-blue rum-baba being attacked by a shoal of eels. Open further, and the most daring of the attackers thrusts its head into the base of the gateau. It is of course a scientifically precise representation of the DNA-bearing sperm passing through the zona pellucida of the ovum.

There are six large models, the maximum that today's bindings permit; there is a lucid, sophisticated and uncompromisingly detailed text, an impressive number of words that now the less do not muffle the visual impact; and there are several additional smaller drawings and mechanisms surrounding each main figure – two sectioned lower torsos are engaged in discreet intercourse, a cell divides, a series of flaps shows successive magnifications of a chromosome. I have to say that though the illustration of female internal anatomy is charming, a greenhouse of exotic floral forms, I had a nasty accident with the male display that I will attempt to describe. The model shows an abdomen, with a neat surgical incision to show the bladder and associated ducts; below it the male member similarly, and unnervingly, split like a kipper. I bent the pages a little below the horizontal, and the appendage rose in a lifelike and reassuring manner, only to show that the underside, that is to say what should have been the outside, was a smooth matt featureless black, evidently part of the backstage machinery, not intended for public display. When I tried, hastily, to shut the book again, I found it had undergone some sort of priapic hernia, and a black pointer, like the hour hand of Big Ben, protruded through the fore-edge, making it impossible to return the book to the shelf and embarrassing to leave it on the coffee-table.

This is the most ambitious and successful of the three books, though it still leaves me wondering if this is really a useful technique of instruction, with its impressive depth-effect and cumbersome movement. Within ten years, I imagine, books may have microchip-controlled visual displays and holographic images that can be viewed from all sides. What will happen then to the city of Cali, Colombia, where each one of these three books was assembled?

This other two books have less elevated objectives. *Watch It Work! The Car* offers a bonus a rather naive model car to assemble, a useful pop-up view of the internal combustion engine with the various systems picked out in different colours, and some rather disappointing moving parts. Pull down a flap and the cylinder fills with yellow and blue dots; turn a wheel and the distributor goes round. "Big deal", says the spoiled viewer. Here, I felt, was a book competing unsuccessfully with an instructional film-strip.

Leonardo da Vinci is more for delight than instruction. Aptly, the many-sided man is illuminated by the whole range of paper devices: the pop-up, the pop-forward, the overlay, the movable (down comes the weight and up goes the model of San Giovanni). There is an array of great beauty transformations pictures on the iris-diaphragm and the Veretian blind principle. Few words, and they well chosen, mark the final splendid panorama: "So he painted the Mona Lisa instead." An appropriate and delightful act of homage.

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One world for another

Christopher Holdsworth

C. H. LAWRENCE
Medieval Monasticism: Forms of religious life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages
260pp. Longman. £12 (paperback, £5.95).
0582 491851
R. W. HUNT
The Schools and the Cloister: The life and writings of Alexander Nequam (1157-1217)
Edited and revised by Margaret Gibson
165pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £22.50.
0198223986

Today it is easy to see that monasticism was one of the most significant and enduring institutions of medieval Europe, for whether one turns to the present landscape, or to our knowledge of ancient literature, the contribution made by monks is writ large. But until the twelfth century, monasteries were by and large only open to those men and women wealthy enough to gain admittance, and when they first began to come into existence in the fourth century they were very much a fringe movement, looked on somewhat askance by the authorities in church or state. One of the virtues of C. H. Lawrence's book is that it helps to explain how such a movement could, even before the Cistercians and their imitators opened up monastic life to the illiterate and less well-heeled sections of society, have such a great influence upon society at large. This, too, is a book which in its clarity of argument and skill in choice of telling episodes and individuals, reflects many years of reading and teaching. It is full of humanity, and written in a judicious, often witty, style. Here are notably helpful discussions of the monk's day, of the relations between patrons and benefactors with the institutions which they supported, and of other currents which linked the cloister with the world beyond it. Lawrence pursues his subject right across Western Europe from its origins to the late Middle Ages, and takes account of groups like the friars, or the Brethren of the

Common Life, who did not entirely follow the norms of monastic life. But despite the book's broad scope, the pace is not hectic, nor is the reader expected to absorb a bewildering variety of names and technical terms on every page; there is a helpful glossary at the end.

The bibliography, however, is unhelpful. A book designed for the general reader should, surely, come to terms with the fact that a reading knowledge of Latin is now uncommon, and should therefore refer, wherever possible, to English versions of texts. Here, although quotations are made in the vernacular, the reader is only rarely given indications of where a translation may be found. The *Life of Anthony* by Athanasius, the *Rule of St Benedict* and the *Letters of Bernard of Clairvaux*, for example, are all cited from Latin editions, or from no named edition.

The late R. W. Hunt's book on Alexander Nequam, *The Schools and the Cloister*, belongs to a very different genre from Lawrence's, that of the doctoral thesis turned into a book with little emendation. Here, however, the case is exceptional, in that although his original thesis was presented in 1936, Hunt's busy life as Keeper of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, where he was at the hub of one of the most productive networks of modern medieval scholarship, meant that he never found sufficient time to work it into book form. Now Margaret Gibson has gallantly and skilfully done this; only those who ever consulted the author's own copy, interleaved with his comments and second thoughts made over the years, can have any adequate appreciation of the magnitude of the task, or of her achievement. As Beryl Smalley remarks in a brief preface (and these must surely be some of the last words that she wrote for publication) all thanks are due to Dr Gibson for making available "a monument to the scholarship of the 1930s and a memorial to the author".

Indeed the book is in at least two senses very much of its period: it assumes that its readers will have at their command not merely a good knowledge of the Latin language, but also a wide

range of Latin literature – scarcely any passage quoted is translated – and it is short. Hunt became a master of the learned article, but here his compressed and not always clearly articulated style needs careful attention.

Alexander Nequam's was certainly not an unknown name before Hunt wrote his thesis, but most of his works, some of them very extensive, lay (as they still do) in manuscript, and no one had made a comprehensive study of them. He was one of a number of scholars born, and largely educated, in England who went to Paris to receive his academic finishing, and there he became well aware of a wide range of problems being discussed in the schools. Returning to England, he taught for a time at Oxford, but then went through some kind of personal crisis which decided him to give up his career and enter the cloister at a house of Augustinian canons at Cirencester. He stayed until his death in 1217, having served his community as abbot for the last four years of his life, and it was there that most of his surviving works were written. Undoubtedly those parts of the book in which Hunt establishes their authenticity, and probable chronology, and lists manuscripts and editions, will be extremely valuable to scholars. Every kind of reader would gain much from those pages where the differences between what Alexander wrote as a master in the schools and what he wrote as a religious are characterized.

The earlier Alexander was fascinated by questions that arose out of his teaching, relating particularly to language and to belief, whereas later on he explored the Bible with the intention of elucidating its inner, spiritual meaning, which he hoped would bring his readers to a more living experience of prayer. One of the striking things, however, is to see how the later Alexander retained an acute interest in the literal meaning of the texts he expounded, so that, for example, his extensive commentary upon the Song of Songs often refers to what he had learnt from a study of the original Hebrew text, and contact with the living tradi-

tion of Jewish commentary upon the Old Testament.

These two books, although so very different in character, can usefully be read together, since consideration of Nequam's life and work may bring to a point questions which Lawrence's wider book may raise. Monasticism was a movement which began when some Christians decided that if they wished "to be perfect" they had to take literally the command to sell all that they had and follow Jesus. There were other renunciations too: marriage, family life, the pursuit of a career, although one may readily believe that some of these did not seem so grave as they do now. Yet it is also true that within the monastery men and women could find new ties, and supportive relationships, as well as the opportunity to pursue a special kind of career. Personal wealth might be given up, but just because the prayers of religious were valued in the world, they often became sharers in considerable corporate wealth and found themselves living at a higher level than that to which they might have been accustomed as lay people. Alexander must have cut a considerable figure in the society around his cloister as Abbot of Cirencester, a community whose wealth was as great as that which flowed into a high noble household, and greater than that of any other house of canons. What exactly had he given up, one may wonder? One may well ask, too, what connection there was between the esteem in which monasteries were held from, say, the eighth to the thirteenth century, and the failure to create more positive attitudes toward the struggles and opportunities of secular life, to marriage, for example. But the men and women who had first sought the deserts of Egypt and Palestine, did so because they wished to escape from a world which they believed to be on the point of collapse, out of which they had to be saved; and this example of *contemptus mundi* remained strong. One of the continuing interests of this monastic world, upon which both these books throw much light, is to observe the contrasts between the world won and the world rejected.

Changing heads

J.R. Maddicott

P.D.A. HARVEY (Editor)
The Peasant Land Market in Medieval England
375pp. Oxford University Press. £28.
0198226616

JOHN LE PATOUREL
Feudal Empires: Norman and Plantagenet
Edited by Michael Jones
410pp. Hambleton Press. £24.
0907628222

From the time of the barbarian invasions until the Industrial Revolution, European societies were shaped by one force more powerful than any other: the conditions governing the transfer of land, whether from the dead to the living, by inheritance, or among the living, by sale, by lease and gift. For England, the history of heritable tenure is now tolerably clear, and the contribution made by the peculiarly English law of primogeniture to the stability of English life over the centuries has been discussed for generations. But the means by which land was transferred among the living, especially among minor landholders, have remained more obscure. There are several reasons for this. First, the conveyance of peasant land *inter vivos* was not shaped so much by the common law, which from the late twelfth century made the rules of inheritance, as by innumerable local and manorial customs which inhibit generalization. Second, those customs varied not only according to region but also according to the status of the tenant, whether free or villein (to take the most obvious division), and the nature of his tenure. And third, the circulation of land was also, perhaps mainly, the creature of economic forces, differing from place to place and from period to period, which are themselves hard to analyse. For these reasons the history of the peasant land market has to be laboriously reconstructed on a piecemeal and regional basis, and from the level of the land rather than from that of the law courts.

Such a reconstruction has been carried

through, with striking success, by P.D.A. Harvey and his team. As the centre of their book are four local studies of the land market as it operated in thirteenth-century Norfolk, fourteenth and fifteenth-century Berkshire, fifteenth-century Bedfordshire, and late fourteenth and fifteenth-century Durham; to which Professor Harvey himself adds an introduction and a conclusion. The haphazard distribution of the surviving records explains both the concentration of the authors on a few selected manors in each county and also their bias toward the later Middle Ages. Yet despite the unavoidable patchiness of the evidence, the operation of the land market (as indeed of the whole agrarian economy) can be seen to have been determined throughout the period by the interaction of two general forces: those of demographic change and of lordship. The thirteenth-century growth of population created an intense demand for land, demonstrated by the minute subdivision of holdings in Norfolk; its decline after the Black Death made more land available, lowered its price and facilitated the accumulation of larger holdings. As long as lords needed labour services for their demesnes, it was in their interests to prevent the fragmentation of holdings, which jeopardized their ability to exact those services. It was at all times in their interests to supervise land transfers, even when they could not prevent them, since their licensing brought financial profit. But neither before nor still after the Black Death were they able to stand against the powerful demographic engine which drove the land market forward. The movement of population, above all else, worked to create a free market in land which lords could neither restrain nor effectively control.

If this story is familiar in outline, its details do much to modify the received view. Janet Williamson shows how parable inheritance, leading to the division of tenements, was deliberately introduced by the lord of one Norfolk manor "because he wished to have more tenants", as his court roll stated; while on another manor, Sedgford, the lord worked his

large demesne by hired labour and was seemingly unconcerned by the fragmentation of villein holdings which the rising demand for land brought about. In both these cases lords seemed to have served their own interests by bowing before pressure from their tenants. After the Black Death the land market sometimes worked in equally unpredictable ways. Rosamond Faith's admirable chapter on Berkshire qualifies some common orthodoxies by showing the precarious nature of peasant prosperity in this period. The families who thrive to yeomanry in fifteenth-century Berkshire usually failed to survive for more than a few generations; the farming of the demesnes, which often saddled the farmer with heavy expenses for such items as repairs, was not always the high road to prosperity which it sometimes appears to have been; and the growth of copyhold tenure gave no guarantee of economic security. The new availability of land did not mean a general upgrading of the peasantry, for, as always, an active land market led to polarization between rich accumulators and declining smallholders. The picture here may be unduly pessimistic, since those on the way down were far better placed to prosper through wage labour than those whom the land market had dislodged in earlier generations; but it casts some powerful shadows over the usual sunlit view of the fifteenth-century countryside. Those shadows were not, of course, found everywhere: Tim Lomas shows that conditions in Durham, for example, came much closer to Thorold Rogers's "golden age of the English husbandman". But they point both to the difficulty of generalizing about the late medieval peasantry and to the crudity of the assumption that hard times for landlords meant good times for their tenants.

Auster in title and microscopic in approach, Harvey's book thus finds its larger and underlying theme in the history of social change. As so often with good historical writing, exploration with a hand-levelling leads to wide horizons. John Le Patourel's posthumous volume of collected papers, *Feudal Empires:*

Norman and Plantagenet, is more overtly concerned with the macrocosm: in this case, the conjoined world of England and France from 1066 until the time of Edward III. Some ten of the eighteen papers are directly on this theme, while the rest concern the Norman Conquest and the history of the Channel Islands and of the north of England. Two have not been previously published. Some, such as those on the origins of the Hundred Years War and on Edward III's ambitions in France, have long been standard reading. Others, such as that on the origins of the Channel Islands legal system, have formerly lurked in unconsidered places: few historians will be regular readers of the *Solihull Quarterly*. All are informed by fine and consistent scholarship and are ably edited by Michael Jones, who also contributes a perceptive and affectionate preface. Both teachers and taught will be grateful to him for bringing together so useful a collection.

"The Litigation between John Marshal and Archbishop Thomas Becket: a Pointer to the Origin of Novel Disselsin?" by Mary Cheney, "The Idea of the Corporation in Western Christendom before 1300" by Susan Reynolds and "The Great Lord as Peacekeeper: Arbitration by English Noblemen and their Councils in the Later Middle Ages" by Carole Rawcliffe are the first three of twelve papers printed in *Law and Social Change in British History: Papers presented to the Bristol Legal History Conference, 14-17 July 1981*, edited by J. A. Guy (who supplies the Introduction) and H. G. Beale (194pp. Swift Printers for the Royal Historical Society, 0901050 94 6). No 40 in the RHS Studies in History series. Others here published off the twenty-two papers delivered range from "The Role of the Criminal Appeal in the Fifteenth Century" by Christopher Whitlock and "West's Symbolography: an Elizabethan Formulary" by Eric Poole to "The Law of Strikes, 1847-1871" by John V. Orth and "The Prisoner in the Box – the Making of the Criminal Evidence Act, 1898" by Graham Barker.

دکتراس الفی

Merchants in migration

Geoffrey Scammell

PHILIP D. CURTIN
Cross-Cultural Trade in World History
293pp. Cambridge University Press. £22.50
(paperback, £7.95).
0521 263190

Trade has at various times been denounced as immoral by religious zealots; envisaged as the elixir of national regeneration by the first European prophets of the dismal science of economics; or consulted as an oracle on the present state and future prospects of the economy by their modern counterparts. But in commerce between different peoples, communities or civilizations there is clearly more at issue than the exchange of commodities. Philip Curtin, in this brief, stimulating and learned book, which he somewhat intimidatingly describes as a study in "historical economic anthropology", examines a large number of trades which he defines as "cross cultural", not with the intention of compiling statistics or building models, but to discover how they were organized and conducted, and to find whether any common patterns emerge, and if so, why.

He travels far and fast in time and space, discussing alike prehistory and the establishment of the European treaty ports in nineteenth-century China. His central thesis is

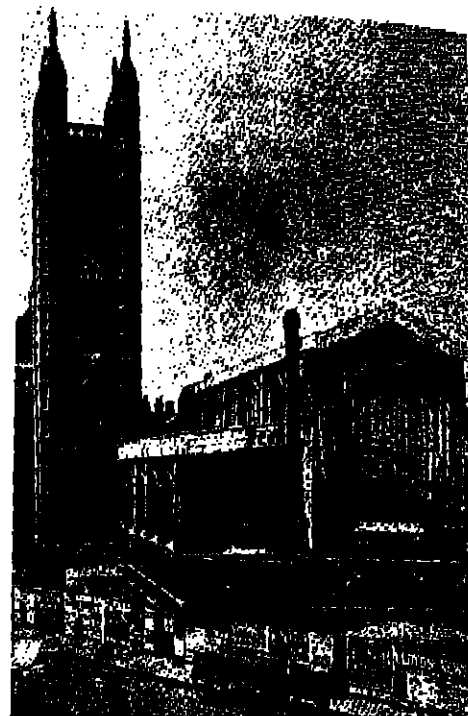
that before roughly 1800 long-distance commerce involved "trade diasporas" – the migration, that is, either temporary or permanent, of peoples to those regions in which they hoped to sell or buy particular commodities. There – and often with far-reaching cultural consequences – they might live in trading factories, as did Europeans in the early colonial days in Africa and Asia, or they might live in outposts, like the white men engaged in the same years in obtaining furs from the Indians of North America, or they might be housed in some suburb or strictly defined quarter of a town or city, as were medieval Italian merchants in Constantinople or the various Asian trading communities in the great entrepôts of the pre-European east. These diasporas, Professor Curtin argues, were no longer necessary in modern times once Europeans, with their superior ships and weapons, established their hegemony over the rest of the world, or when, as in Africa, indigenous men of enterprise, using European technology, set up their own more limited "secondary empires".

Not all will be convinced that the change in commercial organization has been as radical and total as Curtin suggests – certainly not those expatriate Europeans today pursuing profit under assorted restrictions on movement and behaviour in the Islamic Middle East, or the members of those many Chinese enclaves living in generally strained relations with the

local populace throughout much of South-East Asia. Nevertheless this book opens up a particularly fruitful field, touching on such questions as how emigrant communities were organized, under what circumstances close cultural relations with the host people would develop, why some emigrant societies retained their own cultures and what factors influenced the attitude of one people to another.

Curtin makes no claim to have examined the whole of human history, though in fact little appears to have escaped his attention, and he writes with equal clarity, conviction and authority on matters as different as the rise of Sumeria, trade in southern and central America in the pre-European era, the policies of the great European chartered trading companies, or the nature and consequences of the North American fur trade. But this is not merely a masterly and polished synthesis. The highly compressed text is studded with pithy and provocative asides. In many cases, too, the author brings together material easily overlooked. Furthermore, in the course of his general argument he touches on such problems as how various indigenous people were "Westernized" – a process, it might be thought, in which missionaries were initially of more importance than merchants – or the impact on non-European peoples of the acquisition of European weapons. He similarly notices how local rivalries were aggravated by a European presence, with, for example, West African internecine wars intensified as peoples fought one another with increased zest to obtain slaves to sell to the white man, or as the many tribes of North America sought to ensure their monopoly of some lucrative trade which would permit them to obtain European weapons, utensils and drink.

Yet admirable though these studies that Curtin offers are, their very fullness, and the confines to a short book, mean that he has difficulty in drawing out those comparisons which the reader is led to expect. He states, for example, that trade and exchange across cultural lines are perhaps the most important external stimuli to change apart from military conquest, and that external stimulus is the most important single source of change in art, science and technology. But this does not emerge from his discussion, and modern Europe, which has certainly changed enough, in fact showed a resolute indifference to alien cultures, whilst, as economic historians have urged, the home market played a vital role in the early stages of the continent's industrialization. Then again, much more consideration needs to be given to such questions as why



St Mary Aldermary in 1871, reproduced from *The Changing Metropolis: Earliest photographs of London 1839–1879* by Gavin Stamp (240pp, with 211 black-and-white illustrations. Viking. £14.95. 0670 800539).

regimes like the Ottoman sultanate and the Mogul empire (military, predatory and technologically weak) were so accommodating to aliens, or why some trading communities established abroad – notably the German Hanseatic League of the Middle Ages – were able to extort such enormous concessions from often powerful host nations and at the same time to show such a lack of curiosity about, or interest in, the lands in which they did business. And if parallels and comparisons are to be sought it might be argued that the commercial success of the Armenians in early modern times, somewhat lamely explained by Curtin, stemmed from much the same causes as that of the Portuguese private traders in early colonial Asia. Both peoples lacked the control or support of a powerful state. Both traded in regions offering an infinity of opportunities, and both accordingly lived by their wits. Neither constituted a political threat to anybody and both were willing to join with any from whom they might expect to benefit.

But such reflections are a testimony to the quality of this admirable and stimulating book, whose arguments, it is to be hoped, Professor Curtin will have some opportunity to develop at greater length.

Steady build-up

M. W. Greenslade

JOHN WEST
Town Records
366pp. Chichester: Phillimore. £20.
083033 4721

John West's *Town Records* is a substantial successor to his *Village Records*. It aims to provide a survey of sources for town history, classified in twelve chapters. These range from Romano-British times to 1983 and cover the status of towns in 1971–81, town origins, Domesday boroughs, medieval borough charters, guild and borough ordinances, town maps and plans, municipal boroughs before 1835, improvement and other Acts of Parliament 1720–1835, commercial directories, provincial newspapers, national censuses and photographs as evidence. There is much background history and the range of examples is wide, but as detailed models to illustrate the various themes Dr West selects three West Midlands towns, each with a special history – Worcester, Dudley and Birmingham.

Two features of the book are distinctive. The first is the gazetteer at the end of chapters indicating the relevant material for 375 county and municipal boroughs in existence at the time of the Local Government Act of 1972 which abolished them. In choosing these boroughs as "the base-line of the survey" West reads history backwards and largely avoids the problem of deciding what was or was not a town at any one time in the past. The other

special feature is the quantity of illustrations. These include not only plates but a large number of text illustrations reproducing maps, plans, drawings and documents. Particularly telling are those which give versions of the same location at different dates, such as three plans of the site of Boulton and Watt's Soho Works at Handsworth, Birmingham, in 1834, 1845 and today, five plans of central Birmingham between 1731 and 1888 and photographs of Tower Street, Dudley, in 1900 and 1983.

John West claims to provide a guide to "the essential records" of towns and "a gazetteer of index to other local sources of information" – an enormous task for one man. It is inevitable that this first edition should contain many small errors. More serious perhaps are bibliographical deficiencies. Some of the omissions are hard to understand, such as the absence of Susan Reynolds's *An Introduction to the History of English Medieval Towns* (1977). At the local end of the scale the problem can be illustrated by the entry for Walsall's first charter. After p. 24 has got the date of incorporation wrong – the date 1159 given there is in fact the date when the mayor first appeared on the Pipe Roll – p. 102 dates the charter to c. 1198 on the strength of sources published in 1882 and 1926. Yet the evidence was reviewed and a convincing case made for c. 1235 in an article published in a far from obscure local journal in 1977 and trailed in the relevant VCH volume in 1976 – time enough, one would think, for notice in a book published in 1984.

But the amateur historian will be grateful for the guidance he is given. The book is a

The age of the cross

Rupert Bruce-Mitford

ROSEMARY CRAMP
Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture in England: Volume 1, County Durham and Northumberland
Part I: Text. 406pp.
Part II: Illustrations. 267 plates, containing 1,439 illustrations.
Oxford University Press. £95 the set.
0197260128

Corpora do not as a rule make for romantic reading. They have a specific job to do – to bring together and illustrate, within the compass of one publication, every known example of a particular *genus*, with full documentation and physical description of each. In the instance under review it may be said at the outset that the task has been done, or rather begun (for there are the remaining volumes still to come) extremely well, and that scholars in the various fields affected by this extensive, important and little understood material – historians and students of language and literature no less than art historians and archaeologists – will feel deeply indebted to the British Academy for sponsoring this work as one of its major research projects and for the financing of this and, it is expected, the subsequent volumes of the *Corpus*.

The sculptures the *Corpus* will assemble range in time from the inception of the craft in the second half of the seventh century up to the Norman Conquest, a span of four centuries, which, in its latter half, saw the permanent settlement of a large part of the north and east of the country by Scandinavian Vikings. The sculpture of the north falls into two periods: an early very rich and fertile period and a relatively sterile, though interesting, later one, with Scandinavian elements. Of this bulk of material, Volume One covers only a small part of England, the extreme north-east, Durham and Northumberland. This is, however, an area of particular interest and importance to the subject. It is here that the most characteristic and universal vehicle of Anglo-Saxon sculpture, the free-standing high stone cross, a uniquely insular form of monument, originates. Here also the survivals of architectural sculpture and furniture, associated with the earliest stone churches – decorated balustrades and fragments of closure-slabs, altar-frontals, pulpits, panels, box-shrines, reading desks, chairs, thrones and decorative friezes – are best exemplified and studied. The area includes much of the old Kingdom of Bernicia, the northern part of Northumbria which, along the line of the Forth, came into direct contact with the Picts, who developed at this time a fascinating and enigmatic sculpture of their own. In its later phases it shows strong Northumbrian influences. The area contains also the centre from which the Irish converted the north of England to Christianity through St Aidan's mission to Lindisfarne in AD 635. Though Volume One of the *Corpus* deals geographically with only a small portion of the whole subject, it covers an area crucial to the understanding of its origins and early development.

The fact that pre-Romanesque sculptures of other parts of the British Isles have already been fully listed and described for their time in earlier works (published between 1903 and 1950) has made it all the more intolerable that the much larger body of sculpture in England, geographically central to these peripheral areas and interposed between them and the Continent, should still remain without any comprehensive and properly organized publication. Not only will the forthcoming *Corpus* fill this gap at last, but it will do so at a higher level of completeness and efficiency, and with better apparatus for study, pulling together the vast and scattered literature that already exists.

The total quantity of Anglo-Saxon, pre-Norman sculptural remains is now very considerable. There has been a great increase in known examples over the last century, the result of better recognition, repairs to church fabrics and excavation. They now run into thousands. A statistic given by Rosemary Cramp in her preface neatly sums this up. When Romilly Allen and G. F. Browne made the first attempt to list Anglo-Saxon sculpture in 1885, they were able to cite, for all England,

only 197 pieces, from 165 different localities. Out of these, the number for Durham and Northumberland was twenty-eight. The present volume lists in Durham and Northumberland 579 pieces, from sixty-five localities. This richness of material is a measure of the importance of the *Corpus* and the labour involved in its production.

In addition to its prime task of publishing all the Anglo-Saxon sculptural remains in Durham and Northumberland, Volume One lays down the rules for the subsequent volumes. It does this by means of a separate fifty-one-page general introduction, by Professor Cramp, with its own title-page, table of contents and bibliography. This is described as a "handbook of descriptive reference for the whole series" and has been separately off-printed by the Academy. Its Chapter Two deals with the classification of forms and shapes of monument; and a substantial text, accompanied by twenty-seven pages of figures incorporating over 320 individual drawings, is devoted to the classification and terminology of the bewildering range of ornamental themes and details which the sculptures exhibit. There is a section dealing with epigraphy.

Volume One's own introduction (as distinct from this general introduction for the whole series) discusses the various forms of monument that occur in the area; dating criteria; circumstances of production, including a short section (by D. L. Schofield) on the regional geology; and historical background. In the catalogue, the sites are given in alphabetical order for each county and the sculptures numbered individually under each site, e.g. Jarrow nine, Lindisfarne sixteen. This allows the addition in its proper and full context of any new piece of sculpture that may come to light. Each item is described under the following headings: present location; evidence for discovery; dimensions; stone type; present condition (for some have deteriorated since original publication); description, face by face; discussion; date and a full bibliography. Each county has appendices covering stones of uncertain date or dating from the Saxo-Norman overlap; stones wrongly attributed to the pre-Conquest period; lost stones of which no illustration has survived and (for Durham but not Northumberland) sun-dials presumed to be of pre-Conquest date. Finally, there is a feature which seems likely to prove very useful, a tabular analysis, on thirty-seven pages, in catalogue

order, of all the material under twenty-six headings.

Volume One includes several important concentrations of sculpture, and a number of important or outstanding monuments or pieces: Wearmouth/Jarrow ("the Monastery of St Peter and St Paul in two places" as Bede calls it), Lindisfarne, Hexham, Durham as well as important groups at less well-known places such as Aycliffe (Durham), Sockburn, All Saints (Northumberland), and Gainford (Durham). The volume includes almost all the small slabs known as grave-markers or name stones, with inscriptions in a variety of runic or Hiberno-Saxon scripts, which, with their flat relief or incised designs, Cramp regards as an extension of the work of the monastic scriptoria, rather than sculpture. There are notable late hog-back tombstones, especially a remarkable one from Sockburn with scenes in a Viking manner and an animal style that recalls the creatures on the silver bowls of the late-eighth-century St Ninian's Isle (Shetland) hoard. Major items include the famous Acca's cross at Hexham, the intriguing remains of the Rothbury Cross, once a masterpiece with the most elaborate iconography; and the St Andrew Aukland cross, with its flat stylized figures and rich iconography; and the series of sculptures, now scarcely discernible, but of great importance to the history of the subject, associated with the porch of Monkwearmouth. There are also some important new pieces, including fragments of a reading desk, from Cramp's recent excavation of monastic buildings at Wearmouth and Jarrow, showing that these, as well as the churches, could carry decorative sculptures.

The presentation of all this material, and the high standard of knowledge and scholarship manifest throughout, cannot be faulted. Of prime importance is the uniform excellence of the photography on which the *Corpus* depends – almost wholly the work of T. Middlemas, and as much as possible done in the Department of Archaeology of Durham University, where the project is housed. Occasionally, but rarely, the printed end-product seems to let the photography down; and some pieces seem to come out badly from the decision to adhere to a general scale of 1/8 for the reproductions, where practicable. Examples of this are the very high-quality Jarrow feleaze slabs, one with a lush vine-scroll inhabited by a human figure, the other a vine-scroll with birds and beasts,

pieces showing an important relationship with the Ruthwell Cross; and the well-known Lindisfarne "Day of Judgement" stone with its line of shieldless warriors brandishing swords and axes and illustrating, in this context (as the unique sun and moon design on the opposite face of the stone suggests), the theme of "Wars and Rumours of Wars", rather than representing Viking raiders, as used to be supposed. These important sculptures, which could each easily fill a page, are not exactly illegible in their postage-stamp-size reproductions, but detail cannot readily be seen and all aesthetic impact is lost.

A final comment must be: what about the Anglo-Saxon sculptures in the Border Country and Scottish Lowlands, within the bounds or orbit of the Saxon Kingdom of Northumbria? These include the Ruthwell Cross – the finest of all Anglo-Saxon crosses – the Jedburgh slab, the Abercorn Cross, and the Aberlady and Coldingham crosses. Surely such major works of art cannot be omitted from any *Corpus* of Anglo-Saxon Sculpture. This is the proper concern for them, and they call for the same consistent treatment (though this reviewer would not care to have to compile a bibliography for the Ruthwell Cross). It is to be hoped that they will be included in a supplement, though it would perhaps have been better to have omitted the words "in England" from the title-page of the general introduction and included those works here.

Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture has a special art-historical value since it is demonstrably almost always made on the spot. It pin-points styles and subject matter, a firm localization not obtainable with notoriously migrant manuscripts and metal work. It is distributed through the landscape, in the open countryside or in churches, so that the *Corpus*, when complete, will appeal not only to art historians but to interested people in all the regions that the individual volumes will cover. The visual concentration of the material, the informed discussions and clear dating offered for each item, and the fact that the many problems latent in the material are now more readily apparent, will be bound to give fresh impetus to the study of the sculptures themselves. All the more solid will this be because the architectural settings to which almost all the sculptures relate are now covered, with equal completeness, in H. M. and Joan Taylor's three volumes on Anglo-Saxon Architecture.

Writ in plaster

Alastair Laing

DONALD GARSTANG
Giacoma Serpotta and the Stuccatori of Palermo 1560-1790
287pp. Zwemmer. £65.
0302 005501

Giacoma Serpotta is probably the only stuccador's name known to those with no more than a general interest in Baroque art. The reason for this is not far to seek: like the Ticinese Antonio Raggi in Rome, or the ubiquitous Comasque Giovanni Battista Barberini, he was primarily a sculptor, who preferred or was mainly commissioned to work in the supremely plastic medium of stucco. Unlike these and most other stuccadors of any renown, however, Serpotta was neither from the region around Lake Como himself nor trained by anyone who was. There is an important Comasque connection, but it is an aesthetic one: as has long been recognized, one of Serpotta's most important sources of inspiration lay in the work of the Comasque who introduced the employment of stucco to Sicily, Antonello Gagini or Gaggini. The link is between two of the most distinctive features of Palermitan architectural sculpture: the tiered reliefs that were wrapped around the apses of churches in Palermo and its hinterland in the Renaissance, making the whole *tribuna* into a kind of gigantic retablo; and the box-like reliefs, or *teatrini*, on the walls of the oratories decorated by Serpotta and his followers in the Baroque.

The first to give these *teatrini* their full aesthetic due – treating them as something more than simply an amusing transfer of crib sculpt-

ture to mural decoration – was Giulio Carlo Argan, in an article published in 1957 called "Il teatro plastico di Giacomo Serpotta". In which their dependence upon the reliefs of the Gagini was also explored. One of the most absorbing and illuminating parts of the present book is the section on the Oratorio di S. Lorenzo, in which this analysis is extended; and the way in which Serpotta progressed from mere dependence to increasingly individual and complex perspectival effects is expounded with great subtlety and sensitivity. Donald Garstang not only reveals Serpotta's steadily increasing mastery of what is best called stagecraft in his handling of these *teatrini*; he is also able to demonstrate significant theoretical underpinning, in the shape of Paolo Amato's *La nuova pratica di prospettiva*, which was published in Palermo in 1714, when Serpotta was at the peak of his activity.

Only one apparently fruitful line of enquiry goes unexplored, and that is the affinity of Serpotta's *teatrini* with the macabrely allegorical miniature stage-sets in wax by his exact Sicilian contemporary, Gaetano Zumbo. It is true that the two were working on a different scale and in a different medium, and that Zumbo's entire recorded career seems to have passed outside Sicily, but he is inescapably recalled by a relief such as "The Temptation of St Francis" in the Oratorio di S. Lorenzo. Zumbo does receive mention, but only in the appendix, as a parallel to Serpotta's use of wax models, and to his employment of disconcertingly vivid skeletons in the Chapel of Souls in Purgatory in Sant'Orsola del Negri.

Serpotta's popular appeal, however, probably resides less in his *teatrini* than in the character of his life-size statues calibrating the same wall, often bedecked with rich jewellery and

exotic clothing, and accompanied by strikingly naturalistic putti and angels. It is a further strength of the present book, that not only are these figures and their companions given their proper significance as components of elaborate iconographic programmes in association with (all too often, long since removed) paintings, but also that they are traced to Roman models – not so much in the form of high sculpture, as in that of the engraved figures from such temporary structures as catafalques and *Quarant'ore*. In the case of those in the Oratorio del Rosario in S. Domenico, Garstang even finds an explanation for their rich dress and accoutrements – in a kind of piquant antithesis between the richness and ostentation of one group of them and the paintings of the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary, and between the classicizing simplicity of another group and those of the Joyous Mysteries.

This review has talked of "Serpotta" throughout, but Garstang's book – as its full title makes clear – successfully discriminates between the work of three generations of Serpottas, and also aims to provide a consecutive account of the use of stucco in Palermo. In this latter aim it is less successful, since it is hard to provide a coherent account of what was only a partial or intermittent activity on the part of many of its practitioners. Moreover, the author probably overestimates the familiarity of most of his readers with an ill-known region, many of whose monuments have been destroyed or seem permanently inaccessible. It would have helped their comprehension if some of the remarkable wealth of factual material tucked away in the admirable gazetteer of individual buildings in Palermo had been brought in to put flesh on the rather abstract bones of the main text.

سحر العبد

Intentional icons

Christopher Peacocke

RUTH GARRETT MILLIKAN
Language, Thought and Other Biological
Categories: New foundations for realism
355pp. MIT Press. £28.45.
0262131951

Your heart, your eyes and your crying when you were born all serve biological functions. We also speak of the functions of words and sentences. Is this common talk of functions a sign of some underlying similarity, or is it just a linguistic accident? In the striking early chapters of *Language, Thought and Other Biological Categories*, Ruth Millikan argues that it is no accident. Your heart exists in part because it is a thing of a kind which, in the past, did something that caused the blood to circulate. That is what we mean when we say that the function of the heart is to circulate the blood. Similarly, utterances of indicative sentences occur in part because, in the past, utterances of indicative sentence types have resulted in the production of true beliefs. Without equivocation, we can also say that the function of indicative utterances is to produce true belief: this common talk of functions is no linguistic accident.

Essentially the same analysis of statements of function was given some years ago by Larry Wright; and the applicability, far beyond the traditional territory of biology, of explanation by mechanisms of reproduction and selection has been emphasized by Richard Dawkins. Professor Millikan's distinctive contribution is the systematic development of the claim that many central intentional and semantical concepts have to be explained in terms of this notion of function. She argues, for instance, that an indicative sentence's meaning – what it means in the language, as opposed to what someone means by it on a particular occasion – is the content in which it is the function of utterances of that sentence to produce true belief. She also claims that nothing has any intentional content independently of its evolutionary history. These points are cast in a stimulating discussion which is graced by a wealth of apposite biological examples.

Millikan introduces the idea of an "intentional icon" – a representational device which

maps on to the world in a particular way when it is serving its proper function. She argues that intentional content is determined only by evolutionary history, but does not explicitly contrast her view with its main rival, according to which the intentional content of an icon is (very roughly) determined by a range of canonical external conditions which give rise to its occurrence, together with those conditions which give rise to its negation, and its canonical connections with other icons. This rival view can make sense of misrepresentation, and relatively of malfunctioning: one way to do so is to say that the content of an icon is incorrect when a condition, unencountered by the organism, obtains and which, when encountered, would lead to the icon's negation. In fact Millikan's views seem to rule out *a priori* the possibility of truly saying that an organism can, early on in life, possess a richer representational system than that of any of its ancestors: for, early on, it will not be true that this organism's new type of icons are mapped on to the richer environmental conditions because they have been similarly mapped in the past. Yet it seems that an evolutionary theorist ought to be allowed to say that possession of a richer representational system, even early in life, explains the survival of some mutations over others. The rival view does not have the same difficulty with this claim.

The idea of a "proximate Normal explanation" plays a prominent role in this book. The most proximate Normal explanation of how a type has performed a given function is the "least detailed" account which fully explains how, historically, the type has performed the function. Thus the most proximate Normal explanation of the heart's functioning would make reference to its structure and the pressure its contractions exert on the blood. A less proximate explanation would mention the impulses from the brain which cause the heartbeats. Millikan uses this notion in addressing the important question of what makes an intentional icon an icon of one thing rather than another. She writes, "an intentional icon is of whatever it maps onto that must be mentioned in giving the most proximate Normal explanation for full proper performance of its interpreting device as adapted to the icon". Her

view is that, "most likely", on this account a visual mental representation will be of something in the animal's environment, and not of a retinal stimulation pattern. This is said to be so because only the fact that some environmental variable is mapped by the icon needs to be mentioned in the most proximate explanation of how the icon's interpreter – which may be in the same or in another organism – performs its normal functions.

I doubt that this works. In assessing the proposal, we must be careful not to take for granted the intentional content of the interpreter's states: for all intentionality is to be explained, on Millikan's view, in evolutionary terms. The phrase "needs to be mentioned" in the reason she gives for the proposal could cover two quite different cases. First, it might be insisted that what needs to be mentioned is whatever in the environment really benefits the organism when it contains such icons and a corresponding interpreter. Consider the case of an organism which is disposed to eat dark green rather than light green leaves, and which benefits from possession of this disposition because the dark leaves, unlike the others, contain calcium. This first reading would count the organism as having an intentional icon of calcium, which seems an overascription of content. A weaker reading would require only that the explanation of the interpreter's performing its functions mentions the fact that the icon maps on to something which is, in Normal circumstances, reliably correlated with the feature of the environment which allows the interpreter to serve its proper functions. But then this does not rule out the icon being of retinal stimulation patterns. We need a more discriminating criterion. (In fairness, it has to be added that such cases make trouble for many theories, and not only for Millikan's.)

She goes on to develop the thesis that the sense of an intentional icon is the rule in accordance with which it maps on to an object, property or state of affairs, when it is performing its proper function. Her discussion here is all at the level of reference; she omits the dimension of cognitive significance by which Frege originally introduced the notion of sense. Correlatively, she underestimates the relevance of evidential factors to the deter-

mination of some aspects of content, and the resources available to a theorist who believes in such relevance. For instance, at one point she elaborates an example about two communities which both live on the earth and each of which encounters both gold and copper with roughly equal frequency. They both use the term "golper". One group tries to put samples of what they call "golper" to uses which require a non-corrosive metal; while the other puts it to uses which require it to give a green flame in the fire. Millikan says that the first group's word "golper" has the sense "gold", and the second's has the sense "copper", since these are the mappings which explain the survival of the word in each group; yet, she says, the word has the same stimulus meaning for both groups. "Stimulus meaning" is a term of art, and is no doubt not quite exactly what we need. But the evidential properties of "golper" are not the same for these two groups: for instance, the first group will refuse to apply the word to a metal which visibly corrodes, while the second will not.

As the subtitle suggests, Ruth Millikan also intends this book to be a contribution to the defence of realism. The explicit discussions of realism in her book are some of its weaker passages. She needs to argue that the truth predicate, as used in her discussions of intentionality and semantics, is for some reason inaccessible to an anti-realist; but she does not do this, and in fact it is hard to see that it would be inaccessible to him. She does offer a theory of states of affairs on to which sentences "map", when true. But this, too, seems neutral on the question of realism. An anti-realist who can make good his claim to some notion of truth can afterwards tack on a theory of states of affairs of the sort Millikan employs. A defence of realism has to address the nature of truth and what it is to grasp it; but Millikan does not raise these issues.

The book contains much more, including discussions of identity, indexicals, negation, quantification and descriptions. Its strength lies predominantly in its first six chapters, which should be read by all philosophers of mind and language. But throughout there are challenging formulations, which are likely to disturb many dogmatic slumbers.

Gathering the stray leaves

T. A. J. Burnett

MICHAEL COLLIE and ANGUS FRASER
George Borrow: A bibliographical study
231pp. St Paul's Bibliographies, 1 Step
Terrace, Winchester, Hampshire. £22.50.
0906795249

The case of George Borrow is attended by special problems for both the bio- and the bibliographer. He was a difficult, secretive man, often unable or unwilling to distinguish between fact and fiction, romantic, proud and for much of his life disappointed. He could not see that his linguistic work and his translations – his first love – were not what the public, even the smallest public, wanted (indeed the translations are of a Macgonagallian badness and the philology is bred by speculation out of ignorance), and this led him, for instance, to advertise at the end of *The Romany Rye* a list of no less than seven books of translations, only one of which was in fact to appear during his lifetime. As if this were not enough to discourage the Borrowian, a very large proportion of Borrow's manuscripts fell into the hands of that notorious pair C. K. Shorter and T. J. Wise. In the cause of financial gain they dismembered them, sometimes going so far as to cut them into little squares and then insert the pathetic fragments into copies of their privately printed editions with the aim of conferring a spurious association value upon them. As a result of that kind of activity the manuscripts of *Wild Wales* are to be found in no fewer than thirteen different repositories – and there may be more to be discovered. Borrow himself did little to assist the biographer or the editor. In a letter to Dawson Turner in 1844, he confessed that he was writing *Lavengro* "in precisely the same manner as the *Bible in Spain*, viz. on blank sheets of old account books, backs of letters, etc. In slovenliness of manuscript I almost rival Mahomet, who, it is said, wrote his *Coran* on mutton spade bones."

Despite these manifold discouragements, Borrow is a writer who, at his best, richly deserves to have his works ordered and understood. When he remembers the advice of his friend Richard Ford that "What the world wants are racy, real, genuine scenes, and the more out of the way the better", he is a storyteller of genius, whose odd, independent character makes him a strangely beguiling companion. It was for that that I bemoaned in these columns his omission from the *Index of English Literary Manuscripts* (TLS, February 4, 1983). The omission has now been made good with the publication of *George Borrow: A Bibliographical Study*.

As Michael Collie and Angus Fraser themselves point out, their bibliography "has a number of unconventional features. It is not simply a description of the first editions of his works, or an enumeration of titles from the date of his first publication to the present. Rather, their aim has been to provide an account of Borrow's entire writing and publishing career." They have succeeded admirably. The bibliography is arranged in fourteen sections: principal prose works first published during Borrow's lifetime; translations; anonymously published works associated with Borrow; letters; other pamphlets printed for T. J. Wise; other privately printed pamphlets; other John Murray editions; collected edition; publications in periodicals during Borrow's lifetime; articles containing previously unpublished Borrow material, 1889–1981; checklist of books containing previously unpublished Borrow material; nineteenth-century translations of Borrow's work; select checklist of other posthumous publications of Borrow's writings; and a checklist of publications of bibliographical interest, 1899–1982.

Within each section the compilers give a full account of the composition and publishing history of the individual works. These accounts are full of fascinating detail, such as correspondence with the publisher and others, manufacturing costs of the first and subsequent editions and Borrow's share of the profits on individual editions and throughout his lifetime. The compilers have been fortunate that John Murray was Borrow's publisher, since the wealth of that firm's splendid archives was placed at their disposal. Full bibliographical descriptions of each edition are then given

together with valuable comments upon the particular textual features of the second and later editions. This is followed by descriptions of the American editions, both pirated and otherwise, and a list of the extant manuscripts with their locations.

This last feature is both original and useful. Having worked for many years on the Borrow manuscripts in the Ashley Library, I know well the formidable nature of the compilers' task. It is therefore in no spirit of carping criticism that I point out the limitations in the lists of manuscripts. First, since the book is a bibliography, only the manuscripts of works which have at some time been printed are listed. Second, the descriptions of manuscripts are very summary. Third, they are not always accurate in details. MS xvof *Lavengro* (British Library Ashley MS 2388), for example, is described as containing parts of five chapters, whereas in fact there are parts of eight chapters present. So far from there being only one page of Chapter 86 in the manuscript the whole chapter is in fact there. The compilers also have some difficulty with the terminology of manuscript studies. According to them, "Folio 26, a gathering of four leaves, may be a fossil from an earlier version because its pages are separately numbered: it concerns a plan to engage Isopel Berners in a prize fight." Folio 26 is in fact the first leaf of a bifolium which contains four pages of

text. The pages have been numbered by Borrow 5–8, which since they contain the second half of Chapter 92 leads us to infer that the pages containing the first half were numbered 1–4, a practical procedure for one so chaotic in his habits of composition as Borrow, and one which he often adopted. As for being a fossil, the final text found in the draft differs in only a few places from that printed in the first edition, and the paper of the manuscript is watermarked 1846. It will probably be wise therefore to treat the lists of manuscripts as a *point de départ*, and not as the last word on the subject, and I am sure that the compilers would claim no more. Like the compilers of the *Index of English Literary Manuscripts* they have been brave enough to put something on paper which others may improve if they can, and for that they deserve all honour and thanks.

We now have the facts of Borrow's publishing history, and of his earnings as a writer. We have an account of the composition, and negotiations for publication, of his various works. We have the location of a vast number of manuscripts. We have an invaluable appendix illustrating the evolution of Borrow's hand. At last students of both Borrow's life and works have the tool which they needed. Let us hope that this excellent bibliography will encourage a return to the manuscripts and to the texts printed during Borrow's lifetime.

Forty-two-line Bible to Zoom

John L. Flood

HANS-JOACHIM KOPPITZ (Editor)
Gutenberg-Jahrbuch 1984
368pp. Mainz: Gutenberg-Gesellschaft.

Whether by editorial design or because of a shift in contributors' interests, the *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch* is clearly changing. Though the contributors themselves remain a distinguished international set, drawn this year from a dozen countries, the journal's traditional polyglot character has all but vanished: in 1977 one third of the articles were in languages other than German, this last year the proportion has fallen to one-eighth, represented by three contributions in English. This is a pity. If German is to be the language of the future it is too much to ask that each article should be accompanied by an abstract in English and in French? Another change, and for the better, has been that the traditional rather random fare of often slight pieces of esoteric bibliographical interest has given way to a smaller number of weightier articles, with several devoted to aspects of a particular major topic. The 1977 volume comprised forty-eight articles, in last year's there are only twenty-four. This is three fewer than in 1983, yet the 1984 volume is some one hundred pages longer.

The major topic of interest this time is the publishing of law books. There is a comprehensive account by R. M. Thilo of the history of the printing of the *Corpus Iuris Civilis* in Germany from 1468 to modern times, and an American scholar, Barbara Halporn, reminds us that 'Sebastian Brant, now remembered chiefly as the author of that international best seller *The Ship of Fools* (1494), was for many years Professor of Law at Basel and as such was an indefatigable editor of legal works.

The editor, Hans-Joachim Koppitz, clearly wishes to encourage younger scholars. Two major contributions have grown out of dissertations. Mary Kay Duggan, having studied 143 Italian incunabula containing musical notation, proposes a potentially invaluable scheme for describing all fifteenth-century music type, a problem which defeated Proctor, Haebler and other authorities. Then Alexander Bohr, in a study that seems slightly out of place in the book-centred pages of the *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch*, analyses the structure of the "alternative" press in the Federal Republic of Germany, examining the contents, editorial policies and mode of publication of 207 pre-1980 journals with titles like *Cod*, *Dig It*, *Dracula Express*, *Fizz*, *Middle Earth*, *Polipol*, *Sodom* and *Gomorra*, *Und*, *Virginity* and *Zoom*. These "little magazines", dealing with literature, politics, anarchism, feminism, art, music, spring up like mushrooms but for the

most part disappear again after one or two issues, thus presenting bibliographers with a nightmarish task. Bohr, who was awarded the coveted Gutenberg Scholarship by the city of Mainz for this study in 1982, has made an extremely valuable contribution, though he has barely scratched the surface of the problem: *German-language Literary and Political Periodicals 1960–1974* (published by the Institute of Germanic Studies in London in 1975 lists some 700 "alternative" journals for that period alone).

The *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch* has always been the obvious place in which to publish new work on the eponym himself. To the outsider it may seem surprising that exciting new research is still possible, but very clearly it is. Pride of place must go to Eberhard König who, in an essay focusing on Martin Bodmer's copy of the forty-two-line Bible at Cologne, not only gives a superb outline of the importance of analysis of the style of illumination as an aid to identifying incomplete or composite copies but also demonstrates convincingly that this particular copy was illuminated by Heinrich Molitor of Augsburg; this would seem to link not just this copy but possibly the whole forty-two-line Bible project with the contemporary monastic reform movement in southern Germany. As for the date of that Bible, Ferdinand Geldner shows that whereas Erich Meuthen and Severin Corsten have argued that it was completed by the end of 1453, a letter from Enea Silvius de' Piccolomini to Cardinal Juan de Carvajal, dated March 12, 1455, seems to indicate that the work had barely begun by the beginning of 1454. Take these two studies and that of Heinrich Koller who discusses the importance of various reforms in the Holy Roman Empire for elucidating the background to the invention of printing, and it will be seen that there is still a great deal more to be found out about Gutenberg and his work.

The volume contains several other substantial contributions which deserve mention. C. W. Gerhardt, the distinguished historian of printing techniques, pursues the discussion of the use of gold leaf in incunabula, initiated by Carter, Hellinga and Parker in the *British Library Journal* in 1983. Erik Dal surveys five hundred years of printing in Denmark outside Copenhagen itself, a complementary history of printing in the capital being promised for the future. Csaba Csapodi outlines the history of Hungarian libraries from the Middle Ages to 1711, and Fritz Funke that of the Deutsches Buch- und Schriftmuseum in Leipzig which is celebrating its centenary. Though virtually destroyed in an air raid in 1943, the museum has built up a remarkable collection which deserves to be better known abroad, not least for its archive of publishers' and booksellers' papers and its samples and tracings of nearly a quarter of a million watermarks.

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Constructive approaches

P. H. Matthews

RICHARD HUDSON
Word Grammar
267pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £22.50.
0631131868

There are two ways of looking at the grammar of, let us say, *The cat sat on the mat*. One way is to talk of a hierarchy of constructions: at the highest level, that of subject and predicate (*the cat + sat on the mat*); at lower levels, those of verb plus prepositional phrase (*sat + on the mat*), of preposition plus object (*on + the mat*), of article plus noun (*the + cat, the + mat*). These are treated as basic units: thus, at the outset we will posit a unit "sentence" and a syntactic rule by which the smaller units "subject" and "predicate" are introduced as divisions of it. We will then need a dictionary which says which words can appear in which positions. For example, *on* is a preposition and can therefore appear as the first word in a prepositional phrase; *sat* is a verb of the type that can appear with a prepositional phrase following.

The other way of looking at grammar is to talk of connections between individual words. *Sat* is a finite verb which will take a noun as subject; *cat* is a noun; the two can accordingly be connected in the order *cat + sat*. This verb will also connect with a following preposition; since *on* is a preposition, this sequence may be enlarged to *cat + sat + on*. The preposition in turn will ordinarily take an object noun; *cat + sat + on + mat*. Finally, both nouns require articles, which in this example immediately precede them: *the + cat + the + mat*. The words of the whole can then be said to follow from the properties of its smallest parts. One property of *sat* is that it requires a subject, the

requirement is satisfied by *cat* and there is accordingly a direct syntactic relationship between them. *Mat* is there because it or something like it is required by *on*; hence a direct relationship between preposition and noun. There is no need for a prior list of constructions. All we need is a dictionary which sets out the properties of each word individually.

The first approach has been adopted very widely, especially by English-speaking grammarians. It is the foundation of Chomsky's theory of syntax, whose "base component" is a set of rules saying precisely that a predicate can consist of a verb plus a prepositional phrase, that a prepositional phrase consists of a preposition plus a noun phrase, and so on. The hierarchy of constructions is shown by a "phrase-structure tree", which for twenty or more years has been the commonest form of diagram in linguistic textbooks. In taking this view, Chomsky followed his teacher Zellig Harris and other American scholars active in the 1950s. They in turn followed Bloomfield, whose great work *Language* suggested the basis for what became known as "immediate constituency analysis". For anyone trained in that tradition the essential step in syntax is to determine, in our example, that the immediate constituents of the sentence are *the cat* and *sat on the mat*; that the immediate constituents of *sat on the mat* are *sat* and *on the mat*; and that the immediate constituents of *on the mat* are *on* and *the mat*.

The second approach is rarer. As Richard Hudson reminds us, it is found in a pure form (though the connections themselves are classified differently) in the work of the Modistic grammarians in the thirteenth century. The nearest modern equivalent is "dependency grammar". In this theory, verbs in particular are seen as having "valencies": there is a partial analogy with the valency of atoms, which determine the range of constructions a

molecules as it were, in which they can be used. *Sit* and *put* have different valencies, since *put* must take a direct object (*put its paws on the mat*) as well as a subject noun and locative. *Give* has a different valency again, in that it also connects with an indirect object. Since these elements are determined by the verb they are said to "depend on" or be subordinate to it. Thus, in our sentence, both *cat* and the locative preposition depend directly on *sat*. Other elements in turn depend on them: for example, *mat* would satisfy the valency of *on*. Dependency, or "valency" grammar is now quite influential in Europe, especially in Germany or among Germanists.

But can this second approach encompass the whole of syntax? Dr Hudson would like us to believe that it can; by a "word grammar", he means a grammar in which no statement is predicated of any larger unit, phrase, sentence, or whatever. But there are obvious difficulties. I have just said that the subject and a locative depend equally on the verb; but if we accept that account – and Hudson does accept it – we cannot deduce from it that the subject is a special unit distinguished not just from the verb, but from the whole of the predicate. If that distinction is valid we will need a separate rule, which on the face of it is predicated of the sentence. If it is to be rejected, what arguments (apart from its inconvenience for dependency grammar) are there against it?

Then there is the opposition between, for example, a declarative and an interrogative construction. This too is a matter of sentence structure; it is not by virtue of any individual word that *The cat is sitting on the mat* differs from *Is the cat sitting on the mat?* Of course, one can try to pretend that it is. For example, one might say that *is* is ambiguous: as a "declarative verb" it connects with the subject in one order, and as an "interrogative verb" in another. But this is a trick, whose only point is

that the principle of word grammar would thereby be saved.

Then one must consider the problem of coordination. In *The cat and the dog sat on the mat*, both *cat* and *dog* would depend on *sat*. But what of *and*? Apparently it links *the cat* and *the dog*, both of which are units larger than words. In *Either the dog or the cat and her kittens* there is a hierarchy of coordination in which *and* links *the cat* and *her kittens*; then, at a higher level, the whole of *the cat and her kittens* is linked, by *or* or by *either* . . . or, to *the dog*. How can we represent these levels except by the equivalent of a phrase-structure tree, and how can our rules not refer directly to the larger units which the conjunctions connect?

Hudson's book does not satisfy the reader on any of these points. He does show that if the properties of words are stated in the format of his theory, most though not all of the basic structure of the sentence – the choice of subject, verb and so on, and their order in the simple declarative clause – can be made to follow automatically. In this he will be supported by other proponents of a partially "lexical syntax". He makes many interesting remarks about many individual aspects of grammar, though they are almost always inconclusive. He has also performed the service that is usually performed by people who push initially attractive insights too far. But the only reasonable conclusions are that both words and constructions are real units, and both dependency and phrase structure are primitive relations. The first confirms what we have known at least since the 1890s.

POSTAGE INLAND 16p ABROAD 21p

SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, NY. POSTMASTER: THIS PUBLICATION IS BY AIR FREIGHT. SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE ORDERED AT BRITAIN'S AIR FREIGHT. STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10022.